P. o. angl.
153
o

Hearts

P. O. angl.

153 ♀

HEARTS IN MORTMAIN.

HEARTS IN MORTMAIN,

AND

CORNELIA.

"Serene will be our days, and bright
And happy will our Nature be,
When Love is an unerring light,
And Joy its own security.
And they a blisstul course may hold
Even now, who, not unwisely bold,
Live in the spirit of this creed,
Yet find that other strength according to their need,"

Wordsworth's Ode to Duty.

PARIS,

A. AND W. GALIGNANI AND C°,
RUE VIVIENNE, N° 18.

BAUDRY'S EUROPEAN LIBRARY,
QUAI MALAQUAIS, N° 3.

1850.

9
112. D.

BIBLIOTHECA
REGIA
MONACENSIS.

Paris. – Printed by E. Brière, rue Sainte-Anne, 55.

HEARTS IN MORTMAIN,

AND

CORNELIA.

"Serene will be our days, and bright
And happy will our Nature be,
When Love is an unerring light,
And Joy its own security.
And they a blissful course may hold
Even now, who, not unwisely bold,
Live in the spirit of this creed,
Yet find that other strength according to their need."

Wordsworth's Ode to Duty.

I.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

My Dear Sister,—Read the two letters enclosed, and you will see why I must defer my visit to you. How affecting the different tone of the two letters!

Ever yours, R. H.

Ethel to Mr. Hamilton—(Enclosed).

Longbrooke, May 2nd.

Padre mio!—For you know you are my father confessor, and you know I love you so much, that I am not afraid to confess all my sins to you, dearest and kindest of father confessors! But there are no sins in this letter, except, indeed, it is a sin to be too happy, and to forget a few of your wise sayings. Yesterday was my birthday, you remember—May-day, and I was fifteen. "Always older, but never wiser," says my dear Padre; but I *must* have one year more of a child's gladness, and then I will begin to think, to learn, and to be wise. It was such a day!—oh, how I wished for you! I was dressed at six—the sun laughed into my eyes, flickering through the new leaves of the limetree by my window, and the moment I threw it open to breathe the delicious air, came showers of wild-wood flowers, into my arms, over my head—all about—it was Edward—who else could it be? He had watched for my waking. I ran down, wet all over with the dew, and he kissed it off my face, and off my hands, and blessed me as he held me in his arms. My own Edward—my brother! Then to mamma and papa—they were awake and expecting me, and I lay down beside them on their bed. I felt my mother's tears as I kissed her dear face again and again, but my father was full of quiet gladness, and blessed me with happy words. He told me to look upon his table, where I found a necklace of pearls, and bracelets, the first I ever had. He clasped them round my throat and on my arms, and they were so beautiful! Edward's flowers were my "bonny breast-knot." Was there ever such a joyful breakfast, such laughter, such hope, such flowers! My mother's placid face was lighted up, and Edward was full of wild glee. In the afternoon we all went to the dell. You know our favourite grassy bank; there was a canopy above our seat, a canopy of flowers, the pillars breathed with blue hyacinth and "lush woodbine." Edward had made it, with Hugh, the old gardener. Heaven itself could not be sweeter or brighter than that spot, nor angels more happy. It was a day sent by God, and we were right to be glad. I sat at my father's feet, Edward by my side, and he repeated a little song composed for the day.

Then we gathered nosegays for our evening festival, and bound them with white ribbon; and Edward had often to chase the flowers that would fly out of my hand as the cunning breeze came softly down the dell to steal them. We wreathed the letters of our names—*Ethel and Edward*, and he would make the first in mine all of the blue Veronica. Such hours could not last long, they flew while the bloom was still fresh upon our wreaths. We carried them home, and hung them upon the pillars in the rose-garden, through which the procession was to pass. At six, they came, all the school-girls, each with a little gift of her own making for Ethel's birthday.

At night when I lay down, I blessed God for our bright day; I wondered what those felt who were doomed to sorrow. I have never known but joy—should I tremble? Ah! as I write, in comes a box, marked to be sent yesterday, and inside, "from my godfather." I was as sure you had not forgotten me, as that I wore those pearls upon my neck; and how beautiful and graceful is the gift, and how kind the giver! Come to us soon, and forgive these wild lines from your own ETHEL.

Mr. Beauchamp to Mr. Hamilton.
(Enclosed).

Longbrooke, May 3rd.

My dear Friend,—Ethel tells me she wrote to you yesterday, and I doubt not her letter was full of the light-hearted gaiety of the day we had previously spent. It will, therefore, ill prepare you for this, which I write with pain both of hand and heart. The malady under which I have long silently suffered, unknown to the sweet child, whose brightness has been all my sunshine for years past, has suddenly assumed alarming symptoms. I know I have not long to live, and I pray you to come with all convenient speed to Longbrooke. I have one wish pressing heavily on my mind concerning Ethel, and you are the friend on whose aid I rely. I watched the two yesterday, brother and sister only in name, evincing for each other all the fervent and familiar love of that dear relation, and so far I was happy; but when I looked on to a few years, a very few, when I looked upon the beauty of both, the girl's angelic grace, and his almost manly form, for I can call him no longer a boy, then I feared. I trembled lest a forbidden love should start up from among the flowers they innocently played with—lest over all this joy a thunder cloud should suddenly break. They can never marry. Say not now that it was unwise to nurture them together. It is too late. I never told you, nor should I do so now, but that henceforth you must take my place as Ethel's protector and father (till the time comes when she belongs to another). The circumstances I am about to relate. To act as I would wish you, you must know all.

That Edward is my nephew, the only child of my only sister, you are aware. The story of his birth and of my poor sister's sorrows has been scrupulously, and, as far as I know, successfully, hidden from the world. When she was but a child in years, just seventeen, the evil eye lighted upon her, and he who won her innocent heart, a stranger to us even in name, crossed her path. Beautiful in form, noble in bearing, but fallen, like the lost angel, from purity and light to the dark depths of sin, he was at first all that was beguiling, amiable, intelligent, fascinating. My sister and mother lived in the country in perfect retirement; I was occasionally with them, and saw the growing intimacy. A slight acquaintance gave me at once an insight into his character. I knew he was not a man to make her happy, and I spoke of it to my mother—a sensible excellent mother you know she was. She attempted, seconded by me, to withdraw my sister from his society; and then we were told, with a confidence of manner that could not be mistaken, that he was an accepted lover, and claimed her for his bride. Well do I remember the blushing sobbing creature, sinking on her mother's breast, that mother's look of anguish for one moment, and then her returning self-command; my own rising passion—his pride, his peculiar haughty smile, as he took the poor girl's hand, and she did not withdraw it, though her face was turned away; the scene at this moment is all before me, but I must put the rein on recollection; a nervous hand and aching head refuse to serve me long. He was denied our treasure, and he left us. Afterwards we induced her to write a formal refusal of his hand, and we were content; but she never seemed so, and in a week afterwards she was gone, gone with him. My search was fruitless, but she wrote to her mother that they were married, and going abroad. The letter was hasty, blotted with tears; the post-mark was Dover, but there was no other date. I hurried to the coast—a lady and gentleman answering the description had sailed the day before. I returned to my mother; she was broken-hearted.

In a few months another letter came. They were in Paris, my poor sister ill and sad, and she conjured us to write. I set out immediately to go to her; my mother's health was unequal to the long journey, and I went alone. I found her in sickness and solitude on her bed. Her wasted looks, her agony of tears, her clinging to me as she sobbed and murmured, "I did not expect this!"—it all told such a tale of distress, and I knew my fears had not been vain. By degrees I drew from her the story of the past months; he was from home, and we talked together till the evening shades deepened into night; and,

as they deepened, darker grew the tale of wrong and grief. Trembling and hesitating, she imparted to me her fears—fears, she said, which had first arisen in doubts and slight suspicions, but were now confirmed—they were not married. He had deluded her by a false ceremony. It would take me too long now to tell you the long tissue of falsehoods by which the poor young creature was lured on to misery. I could not bear it. I bade her hush, I clasped her in my arms, and wept with her, and then bidding her be calm and try to rest, and saying I would return to her, I rushed from the house into the open air. I felt choking with sorrow, indignation, anger, and scorn for the deceiver. At that moment I saw him approaching. I cannot tell you all that passed. To the torrent of my reproaches, he answered with a quiet cold sarcasm that goaded me on. He disappeared for a few minutes, and, returning, showed me a brace of pistols, and offered me one; in the storm of my passion I forgot everything of my sister but her wrongs and my revenge. I grasped the weapon eagerly, only replying, "At once," and we walked rapidly away. We fired, and he fell—dead. That night Edward was born, and two days after, I laid my sister in the grave. She knew all ere she died, and she forgave me; yet she shed bitter tears to the memory of one unworthy of her. Women will love through everything. One request sternly and solemnly she made of me, and I gave her in answer a promise as solemn. "I commit my child to your care. Let him have a home with you, if you marry, and if you have children, let him be a brother to them; but," she added with sudden energy, "the union must be no closer; if it were a curse would fall upon it. Your hand is stained with his father's blood." Her tones were wild, full of emotion, and have since sounded in my memory as prophetic; and now, when I am about to leave to the care of others the one beloved girl who has grown up with this boy, hand in hand, those words ring in my ears, and I shall not die in peace till I know it cannot be. She must give me her promise, her solemn vow, and then I shall die in peace. I wish you to be present, you and her mother only. He will be much away from Longbrooke, travelling, and at College. It would, I think, be cruel to acquaint him with what he is now happily ignorant of, his birth, and his parents' death. He is amply provided for. His mother's fortune, and a portion of mine, place him far beyond the reach of any pecuniary needs, and his habits, though refined, are not extravagant. That I was the murderer of his father, wretched and evil as that father was, is a fearful truth, and all I do for him is more than due. I have left to him all my landed property, made him, in fact, my son, with full regard at the same time to the claims of my daughter, whose portion is also ample. A new life and new friends will soon dissipate in Edward's mind the fervour of past remembrances, and Ethel will remain to him as a sister. Such at least, I trust in God, may be the result of my present arrangements. You will be here in a short time. Think over this letter on your way.

E. R. Beauchamp.

II.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Longbrooke, May 7th.

You ask me to tell you everything about my visit here, and in you, who have so long known and loved this dear family, I do not fear to confide. You shall know all, and it is a great relief to me to rise from disturbed slumbers, to converse with you. I was wearied out last night, and left my poor friend's room, assured, by the physician, that he could never again revive to be conscious of my presence. Here comes our child's tap at the door, with her sweet "How are you, Mr. Hamilton? I have left my mother asleep." Here she is, up and dressed, and ordering all so quietly and watchfully, lest the poor widowed mother be disturbed. Now I see her stealing out for a few fresh roses to place in her dead father's chamber, and he is with her, the noble loving youth. Ah, sister! I am a foolish old man! these things touch my inmost heart. But I must tell you of yesterday, a day of trial to the parents, and to me. When I arrived, I found it was all too true; Beauchamp was dying; the sudden fatal seizure apprehended by the physicians had taken place. I entered his room, and saw it all at a glance; but he was perfectly sensible, began immediately to speak on the subject of his letter, and we had a long confidential talk. At first, I endeavoured to dissuade him from his intention of demanding so solemn a promise from his young daughter. I was bold enough to offer my word that I would do all in my power to accomplish his object; that I would separate Edward and Ethel, and use every human means to prevent the possibility of their marriage; my assurances could no

shake his purpose. "No," he said, "if he had lived, he should have relied upon her love for him, and obedience to his will, but present and visible influences were so strong, and might urge her too strongly; and since he must leave her, nothing short of her sacred promise, made to him on his deathbed, could give him peace at that hour." In short, for his strength was fast failing, this darling child came in, when summoned by her mother, and nestled up to his bosom, the long locks of her bright brown hair almost hiding the premature grey which thinly clothed his head—the fine head you have so often contemplated. There she nestled, and he kissed her fondly, gazing on her for a few moments, with a look of unutterable sadness. She looked in his face, and burst into tears, "Papa!" she cried, "what is the matter?" "Be calm, my child," he said, with great self-command, "be calm and listen to me. I feel deeply anxious at this moment, but you can relieve me." She brightened instantly. "Oh, tell me how, dearest Papa!" "Whenever I die, Ethel, it will be a comfort to you and to your mother, that you should act as I would have wished you were I near to counsel. You are growing out of childhood now, and I should expect from you steadiness in any course of duty appointed." He paused. "Yes, Papa," she said, in a low serious tone; "say what you require of me, and I am ready to comply." Her eyes were cast down, the tears stood on her fair young cheek. "I ask your promise," said her father, impressively, "your solemn promise that you will never marry your cousin Edward." She started, then fixed her moist glittering eyes on her father, and a smile lighted up her whole countenance; she knelt before him, and said, with perfect innocence and freedom, "I promise you. Are we not brother and sister now, and always? He cannot be dearer to me than he is. I solemnly promise you that in this there shall be no change. Oh, if I could as easily relieve your anxieties always!" "God Almighty bless you, Ethel! And now," turning to his wife, "kneel down beside our child, Louisa, and promise with her, that this prayer of mine shall ever be sacred to you both." The mother was silent; she feared, and did not obey him, but Ethel, lifting up her serene bright face, and embracing her mother's knees, prayed her to comply. "Promise him, Mamma! I have done so from my soul, and I am happy if it gives my father peace. Can we be less happy —can our Edward be less dear to us than he is? Promise him, Mamma!" So then they both knelt; and the vow was registered in the sight of God; while I—I confess it to you —with a heavy heart and presentiment of coming shadows, witnessed the affecting scene; and saw the excited sufferer sink back exhausted on his pillow.

He became rapidly worse. I need not tell you of the widow's burst of grief, of the child's passionate, though suppressed, sorrow. He was soon insensible to all. I was roused from my disturbed rest by the hasty tread of feet; I was called, and joined my poor friend just in time to see him breathe his last, to support the fainting wife, followed by her dear weeping child, when they left the chamber of death.

Much as his letter had alarmed me, I scarcely anticipated so speedy a termination. The anxiety and excitement doubtless hastened it, though he has, I believe, long suffered from a complaint of the heart. I shall, of course, remain here for the present.

III.

The Same.

May 19th.

Your soothing letter has been the greatest comfort to me; you knew how much I needed it, for it is long since, in my quiet everyday life, I have been called upon to act in circumstances of painful interest like these.

It is a week to-day since the funeral took place, and we are beginning to resume our wonted calmness, and the dear ladies to return to their usual occupations. Ethel is everything to her mother; and her cousin, or, as she calls him, her brother, is devoted to them both. The painful impression left upon my mind by the last interview with my deceased friend begins gradually to wear off. I see so much that leads me to hope nothing painful will be entailed by the course he took. I am beginning, by degrees, to accustom this affectionate party to the idea of separation. At times, the mother seconds me, at others she rejects the idea, for she loves him as her own son, and you know she is not a person of courage, or very energetic mind. Amiable, indecisive, affectionate, but weak; and apt to take a somewhat gloomy view of things, she is perpetually veering about as to "what will be best." One day she decides that he must go, the next, with kisses and tears, she declares she cannot

part with him. Ethel, already superior to her, formed indeed in an altogether different and nobler mould, in whom a sense of duty seems now paramount to every other, told me the other evening that she was quite reconciled to the idea of Edward's leaving them, and that she was sure it would be better for him to mix in other scenes. I agreed with her, and encouraged her to speak of it. "I tell him so," she said, "but he will not let me talk of it; he has been so long shut up in this happy place. It is two years now since he came from school. He is nineteen; only think how old he is getting! Yet he says he shall never be happy away from us." "You are a good sister, Ethel," said I, "and you must urge him to obey you in the same disinterested spirit. With his abilities and turn for study, he is losing time here, and I should advise his going very soon, whenever your mother consents, and seems better able to part with him." At this moment we saw him coming up to us, and when he joined us, she told him, with that peculiar tenderness of manner I never observed in any one else, what we had been speaking of. I saw his face clouded, but she continued speaking, pointing out, with a justness and discernment beyond her years, the advantages of that new intellectual life he ought to seek; and when she paused, saying, "Don't you agree with me?" he took both her hands in his, and replied with earnest affection, "Yes, Ethel, I will go; I will do as you wish. I will work hard for your sake. Look on—you shall be proud of me." His eye kindled—he looked a man, a man with the consciousness of power swelling in his heart. I embraced them both in the pride of my heart, exclaiming, "Now you are a true brother and sister to each other. Be ever thus. Urge each other on in the right way. Be united in virtuous effort, as in faithful affection." The dear child kissed the old man's cheek, and Edward wrung my hand with honest grateful regard.

We agreed, as we walked home, that, in the course of another week, we would arrange matters for his departure. And so, at present, are our plans laid. I must stay awhile with them after he is gone, until the arrival of their friend Eleanor Osborne, who will spend the summer at Longbrooke. As she is a little older than Ethel, and I hear of a very lively pleasant disposition, she is, I hope, just the person to live with them. Ethel, though always cheerful, wants sometimes a little assistance in raising and supporting her mother's spirits. She has never alluded to her last conversation with her father; it evidently made a great impression, but not an unhappy one, on her innocent young mind. She seems to consider Edward as so entirely her brother,—God grant that this happy confidence may last.

I hope to spend a month or two with you when my visit here is over. But you shall hear from me again before I leave Longbrooke. I think I never saw the place looking so beautiful. Ethel's fondness for flowers, and absolute friendship with old Hugh the gardener, produce a glorious display of bloom; besides the flower garden, the colonnade which runs before the drawing-room and library windows is full of plants in blossom. They are very pretty, and Ethel is always telling me the names, but I forget them. I can never get beyond geranium, myrtle, and rose; and I suspect the little rogue puzzles me with names of her own coining, for she laughs so when I try to remember them. The Thorns in the Park are in full beauty and fragrance, and remind me of those I so much love in old Sherwood Forest.

IV.

The Same.

Longbrooke, June 9th.

You may expect me on the 17th. "To-morrow week" is the earliest day they will allow me to name.

Edward left us some days ago, and to-day Ethel is quite absorbed in the delight of a letter from him, the first we have received. He is evidently somewhat out of spirits, but on the whole his letter is as cheerful as I could expect, and full of love to Ethel and her mother. The tears were in the eyes of both while they read it. There is indeed something wonderfully fascinating in this youth. A mingling of the dignity of manhood with the tenderness of the gentlest affections; he is gentle as a woman, yet none could say he is not manly. He is courageous to daring, yet his consideration for the feelings of others always checks any overweening display. I have seen him soothe his spirited horse when crossing Ethel's path, to move quietly in her sight, though his fine horsemanship is remarkable; or, at the appearance of her slightest anxiety, row his boat to shore, and give up, to please her, the amusement of an evening. There is no selfishness about

him, and what a charm this is in character! His intellect is large as his heart, and I feel convinced he will take high honours at College.

Miss Osborne arrived this evening. I think I have told you before, that her mother was an early friend of Mrs. Beauchamp's. The daughters have been brought up in habits of intimacy, but they are very unlike. Eleanor is clever, very amusing, brilliant in manner and conversation, but the brightness wants relief, it wants softness. She is indeed handsome, taller than Ethel, and her hair darker, and figure larger; but her beauty is of the same piquant lively character as her manner; there is something saucy in the turn of her pretty lip, and the throwing back of her proud little head. She reminded me of somebody—guess who!—you can—years, years, *ages* ago!—I had not seen her since she was quite a child, but she declares she recollects me. It was so like her, in her lively way, to say so; but I don't believe she does; however we were soon excellent friends, and she enlivened our little party considerably. She seems delighted with the place and the country, which she has not visited for some time, and we walked out all the evening.

Several of Mrs. Beauchamp's acquaintances in the neighbourhood have called here, but we have not seen any but a few friends as yet. At Mrs. Beauchamp's request, I called upon Sir Charles Herbert at Buckstead, who has just taken up his abode there, on succeeding to his uncle's property. He is not a very young man. I was pleased with the frankness and polish of his manner, and hope to become further acquainted with him on my next visit. Adieu till we meet. I know not how to escape out of the net this dear child's love has spread for me here!—but I am determined to come to you on the 17th.

V.

Ethel to Mr. Hamilton.

Longbrooke.

My Dearest Mr. Hamilton,—I feel as though I ought to say, Father—you were always almost my father, and now indeed you stand to me in the light of a parent, and are more to me than ever you were. Let me thank you for all your goodness to us, for the thoughtful sympathy that soothed our deep affliction—for the cheerful constant care that helped to lead us back to life, from the solemn shades of death. I never felt before how awful and overwhelming it is when deat comes close, when it alone looks like reality, and life like the dream—how it changes our estimate of visible things, and brings eternity like a conviction to our hearts. How little did I dream when I wrote to you last, so joyously, that this grief was near. When we wreathed our spring-flowers in the dell I heard no voice of warning; I looked on from joy to joy—but now I can say no more. "What do they feel who sorrow?"

We are lonely without Edward and you; but we are not sad. Sometimes I see the quiet tears steal down my mother's face, but I know that her hopes out-number them—the hopes are immortal; the tears, tributes only to the trials of time.

My father has left so much by which it is sweet to remember him. Everything about the place breathes of his care, of his taste, and of his kindness. I see the grateful memory of him in the faces of the poor, I trace it in their peaceful enjoyment of many a good his liberal hand provided—in the beauty of the summer time, when he used to walk abroad "with lips of praise" among the works of God; in his books, where many a passage, marked and commented upon, bears evidence of his observing active mind. I am humbled when I think what the child of such a father ought to be. Edward is more like him, more worthy of him. Help me, my dear friend, to improve; pray that I may not fall short of the aspirations which rise in my heart. I would be his child, follow in his steps here, and rejoin him hereafter.

We have more letters from Edward—letters full of love and comfort, and it is a rich day for us when two letters, from Edward and from you, greet us on our breakfast-table. One such day we have had, and I was happy, happier than I thought I ever could be again. But then I felt suddenly checked in my gladness—as if I were untrue to the memory of the dead—I hid my letters in my bosom, and ran down into the dell, and sat beneath the canopy of withered flowers, and thought upon the past. Something whispered to me, as I sat musing, that it was no sin to be happy again, that the remembrance of the beloved lost one should only temper, not diminish, the joy that springs from pure and generous sources. It was his own blessed spirit giving me comfort, and I went back to my mother with a contented heart, and we passed a cheerful day.

Your favourite Oleander is in flower (that is its name; now remember, for I won't let you call it "that pink thing" any more). It stands in the colonnade, and I water it every evening for your sake. We had a delightful shower yesterday which refreshed everything, all plants and trees seemed growing and expanding. I almost think I grew an inch or two myself! In three months Edward will be back again, and then, Padre mio, you will come too, and how happy we shall be! Three long months yet for me to learn a lesson of patience—and then, then, Edward must go for two long years! The months seem nothing, when I look at the years. I am conscious of a new feeling when I contemplate future trial, a desire to submit to the will of God, and I know, though I did not understand it then, what my father often taught me, that this desire must become a principle, and be my firmest support. I have heard and read that it has power to nerve the weakest heart, to kindle the most heroic resolution. Surely we have all, in this life, need of such an aid.

My mother is well, and sends you her affectionate regards. Eleanor is a merry companion, and we go such long wild walks and rides. She does not mind what she rides, and will mount anything!

VI.

Edward to Mr. Hamilton.

Longbrooke, Nov. 8th.

Ethel has promised to enclose this in her next letter to you. To-morrow I leave this beloved place, and those I love so much. I commend them to your care. Guard, cherish my sweet Ethel. I tremble to leave her; yet I know not why I should, for she is with her mother, and you, her second father, and ever safe under a higher care. Surely the angels of heaven delight to watch over one so good, so lovely—one more like unto themselves than to the children of earth! Adieu, my good Mr. Hamilton! God bless you!

I have given Playfellow, my favourite horse, to Ethel. I believe he is perfectly temperate, and will carry her well; but I wish you would see after this, and if he is at all above her hand, don't let her ride him.

VII.

Ethel to Mr. Hamilton.

Longbrooke, May.

A year is gone,—a year and a day, since I wrote to you so joyously after my birth-day festivities. I seem to have lived more than a year, so much has passed since then; I was gay and light-hearted, and I am not less happy now; but it is a serene calm happiness, no longer a wild glee. It is true that yesterday brought many a pensive thought, —no dear papa, no Edward, to greet me with the early morning; but the recollection of both was soothing; that of the dead was peaceful, and of the living, full of hope and love;—and, ere the day closed, I had the kindest letters from Edward and from you, so that it was not without much of its usual enjoyment. And what do you think?—It was so good of Hugh, the dear old gardener! He had dressed up again the bower in the dell, not with wild flowers, but with the choicest of his garden and greenhouse favourites,—good old man!—but he did not know how much dearer to me were those withered branches he swept away, which I had loved and hoarded even in their decay. But perhaps it was as well—better they should go. No hand of mortal can sweep from our hearts the beloved memories; these are safe, and these we may keep for ever.

We had a visit during the day from our new friend, Sir Charles Herbert. He is often with us, and we like him as much as ever; more and more, indeed, as we know him better! He is most kind to my mother, and draws her into conversation with a tact and gentleness just suited to her quiet nature; and his information is so varied, and imparted so pleasantly. We sit for hours in the library, or, on a warm day, in the colonnade, listening to his tales of travel. He has been in many countries, in many exciting scenes, and in many dangers, so that sometimes I trembled while I listened. He is so good and noble-minded, that we could but wish him safety and success! He has lent me some German books, and reads with me whenever I wish it. We are reading now the Wallenstein of Schiller. We have to thank you for cultivating for us the friendship of so charming a person.

I think he looks older than you say he is, perhaps in expression rather than in feature, a look of care on the brow, and a certain mournfulness in the eye, except when he lights up in conversation; and the grey hair about the temples, that almost reminds me of my father. He lives much alone at Buckstead, and seems to like it. I am sure I hope he may stay there. Now and then, for a

day or two, he has company, but we seldom see visitors, for my mother shuns society. I have only once seen his sister, a sweet-looking person, younger than himself, surrounded by a group of lovely children, with whom he was laughing and playing when we went in. I quite loved him as I watched his care and kindness, and saw how the little dears clung about him. This is your time for visiting us. I expect you very soon. Come, my dearest Padre, to your affectionate

ETHEL.

I enclose Edward's letter. Is he not the kindest of brothers?

VIII.

Edward to Ethel.

Mola di Gaeta, April.

How I wish thou wert with me, sweet Ethel! Here is the blue Mediterranean at my feet, stretching out before my eyes,—parting me from you, and yet so beautiful! And here are orange groves! You think your orange-trees at Longbrooke are so fine, and so they are for England; but these!—why, child, I have been walking among woods of them, and gathering fruit and flowers from the same tree,—quantities, delicious,—and I wished for you to share with me. Then I came in, and stood on a balcony overlooking the sea, across the beautiful bay to the Mola, which encloses it on the other side. The balmy air wafted the scent of the orange-groves all around; and the soft branches of the olive-trees, forming a wood on the right, stretching along the bay, waved in the evening breeze, keeping time, as it were, with the lazy happy waves, that came with a light rushing sound, rolling slowly on the shore. Ethel, this is beautiful!—but it seems imperfect, for you are not by my side to share the beauty, and whisper that fond little "Yes!" which so often breathes assent to what I say.

I have sketched the outlines of the scene from my window, which will give you some faint idea of the place; but I cannot give you, in any sketch, or by any words, a conception of the exquisite air, the atmosphere of indescribable softness and beauty, that imparts all its charm to the view. Some day, perhaps, we may be here together.

What a glorious country this would be, were it only free!—could it, as the patriot fondly hopes it may, shake off the odious yoke of Austria, and stand out in its strength, Italy once more! I believe there is already a spirit abroad, a spirit of moral regeneration, a desire to forward knowledge among the people, a struggle towards mental enlightenment, which must, in the end, forge a strong weapon for the fight for liberty, and throw down some of the strongholds of oppression and error.

In the midst of all this beauty and interest, my heart turns proudly and fondly to my free and happy country, to merry England, where, under our cloudy skies, we tread a freer soil.

I began this letter a few days ago, and now behold me at Naples; and from here, over this same blue sea, I must send a letter of greeting for the fair May-day that is coming. Yes, over land and sea flies this messenger of love to you, dearest Ethel. God bless you, and give you ever new joy, and health, and peace! I think of you always as a child, a being of the spring-time, a young flower yet folded, a little Psyche with budding wings; but this day recurring bids me remember that years are passing, and Ethel will not always be a child. In her seventeenth year! I must teach my pen discretion and politeness; I must be becomingly respectful! But in a year I shall see you, and you will be the same as ever, I know you will. How delightful is that perfect knowledge of another's heart, that perfect confidence in its truth, that precludes from our thoughts of it all ideas of change! And how is our dear mother? and our good god-papa?—and Eleanor, and Playfellow, and your plants, and all the things you love?

It seems a long time since I heard from home; do write to me very soon, and tell me everything, especially of yourself,—your studies, your thoughts, and how much you miss me. I am the same exigeant fellow I always was, and your most affectionate cousin,

E. L. BEAUCHAMP.

IX.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Longbrooke, June 7th.

THIS is a happier visit than my last. I found Mrs. Beauchamp much better and more cheerful, and Ethel the very picture of innocent happiness. She and her mother were sitting at an open window when I arrived, and she ran out to meet me. I was surprised and pleased to see the change one short year had made in her appearance; she looks healthy and active, and her slight

figure has gained in womanly beauty. Her manner, too, though the same frank gladness was there, had a gentle dignity about it, a dawning of the modest reserve of a woman; this I remarked afterwards. At first, when we met, it was all kisses and joy, and no reserve, I assure you—anything but that in our pleasure at meeting. Miss Osborne was with them; she, too, looked very well, and very gay; I never saw a lovelier pair of girls. At dinner, Ethel was so graceful and attentive! She sat, as she always does now, in her mother's place; and I in the chair once occupied by her father. I saw her moist eyes, and caught a faltering in her voice, but it was only for the first moment; she was cheerful again, and we all chatted together during the meal; I silently observing all her ways, and pleased to see how modest and maidenly they were—her gentle tone, when she spoke to the old butler, and the respectful way he bent his white head to his young lady's ear. These little things tell me much. I see Ethel is respected as much as she is beloved.

When we were at tea, Sir Charles Herbert came in, and was received by the whole party with evident pleasure. He did not seem like a stranger; he entered into our conversation as if quite at home with the tastes and habits and occupations of the ladies; and on their part there was no reserve, but an entire friendliness, which almost surprised me; for it is not like Mrs. Beauchamp. However, I was very glad to see it, for he is worthy of all their regard. "No German to-night," I heard him say to Ethel, with a glance at me. "Oh no," she answered, "I am too happy to-night to read German, or anything else; it is near a year since I saw my dear Mr. Hamilton!" So she smiled, and, like the darling she is, came to my side, and then drew me to sit beside her, and prattled gaily of the thousand things she had to show me in the morning. I saw Sir Charles's eye fixed upon her, with a look of affectionate admiration. He did not talk much, but listened to her for awhile, and then joined Mrs. Beauchamp and Eleanor, who were playing chess. These details of our evening, trifling in themselves, will give you an idea of how pleasant it was, and how it impressed me, on my first arrival, with a comforting feeling of the happiness of those who have been, in a great measure, entrusted to my care. Three or four days have passed, and this impression is deepened. I see Ethel good, happy, and useful; depended on by her mother, adored and respected by her dependents, and walking like an angel of peace through the quiet scenes of her daily life; visiting the poor, consoling the afflicted, and at home cultivating the active intellectual powers and the refined tastes I have always delighted to observe in her. At present, all is a happy calm; blue skies above us, green bright earth below. God grant it may last—but such is not the lot of humanity. I shall conclude this letter to-morrow. Ethel has just run in to say that I must go and ride with them. She is to mount me on her pony. I never can refuse her anything, so mount I must. She wishes me to see how well Edward's horse carries her. Everything of Edward's is the best; everything he does is right in her eyes.

June 8th.—Our fine blue sky I boasted of yesterday had well nigh been clouded. We all started to ride, in high spirits, and were joined by Sir Charles Herbert, on the road to Buckstead, our way lying through the park. You know I am not a very daring horseman (I hope nobody observed it, but I was nearly off, more than once), and Ethel laughed at my repeated cautions, as Playfellow, with arched neck, and ears erect, seemed on the wing for a gallop. Sir Charles rode on beside her, and I with Eleanor. His horse, usually quiet enough, was catching, I could see, the infection of Playfellow's spirit. I was on the point of riding up to beg we might change, and that he should take my place by Eleanor, when at that instant a dog rushed through the hedge, and jumped into the road; Ethel's horse started, and then both were off at full speed. In a few moments Sir Charles pulled up, but Ethel could not, and was soon out of sight along the winding road, while we could hear her horse's feet going away full gallop. He turned pale as death. "Good God!" he cried, "and we must not follow her!" "Come on," said I, impatient—and we trotted quickly on the turf by the roadside. We were too agitated, too anxious to speak. In less than half a mile—blessed sight! we saw Ethel coming back to us. "Thank Heaven," I exclaimed, heartily, "here she is!" Sir Charles did not speak—but the colour flushed again into his cheeks, over his brow, and I saw—yes, it is true—that in his emotion, his eyes filled with tears. "Hang those lazy grooms," cried I, "they don't half exercise that horse; he's perfectly wild and dangerous." Here we met, her horse tamed, herself smiling, panting, though she declared she was not a bit

frightened. I urged her to dismount, and ride the pony. She would not. "Ethel!" said Sir Charles, "I entreat you." No, she would not. Playfellow was quite good-tempered; it 'was only his spirit, and we would ride quietly. "Now we must look for my hat," she added, laughing, "and, dear Sir Charles, always call me Ethel, as you did just now." He turned to her with such an expression—such a beaming grateful look! Sister, my eyes are old, my apprehension not so quick as it was wont to be—but I see, I apprehend, something, don't you?

And now I must close this long letter. Adieu.

X.

The same.

Longbrooke, July 29th.

I NEVER passed two months more pleasantly than the last; I have been talking of leaving for the last week or two, but Ethel has been so entreating and so positive that here I am yet. However, I shall certainly go next week, for I am to escort Eleanor home on my way, and her father will not spare her any longer. She is certainly a fine creature, but untrained, or rather, I might say, untamed—in a state of wild luxuriance, impulsive, excitable—such bursts of gaiety, such a ringing laugh, such enjoyment of everything enjoyable, and, I must say, no affectation; you see her character in every gesture, you hear it in the tone of her voice, you guess it in the cloud over the brow, the curl in the lip, when disappointed or thwarted. People who admire this sort of character would be enchanted with her, but I think you would agree with me in loving and admiring more the simple cheerfulness of Ethel, her serenity, and perfect grace of both mind and body, not unrelieved by moments of exquisite animation, playful, flitting, up-turned looks of sparkling fancy. And, if I mistake not, she has more courage than Eleanor. I have been made especially happy by a conversation I had with Sir Charles Herbert last evening, which I will relate to you as nearly as I can. You are so kind and so faithful a confidante, and so sincere a sympathiser in all my cares and pleasures, that I do not hesitate to make you acquainted with everything that interests me so deeply.

We were returning from a stroll after dinner at Buckstead, where I had dined with him alone, and our conversation, led by him, fell upon our friends at Longbrooke. His manner was full of animation as he spoke of them and praised them. "Ethel," he said, "has all the sweet innocence of a child, with the modesty and good sense of a woman." "Yes," said I, "a cheerful heart and a thoughtful mind—an aspiring active intellect—and a temper, loving, joyous, kind, as ever woman had, delighting in goodness and affection, and repaying it a thousandfold. Yes, it is true, though I say it!" We paused, then he said slowly, as if reflecting, "She is young, too young, and I cannot yet speak to her as I would to you. You are her guardian, almost father; may I speak to you unreservedly?" He saw my assent, and went on. "I am not so old as I look, Mr. Hamilton," (and here he smiled slightly, and there was a touch of sadness in his voice,) "still less am I old in heart. But I have lived through much, through many years of care and loneliness, and they have silvered my hair and clouded my brow, and done for me what time does for most men." He stopped. "May I dare – ought I—to hope, that I might ever win the affections of this bright young creature—that she could ever love me, and be my wife?" His voice trembled, and he looked at me earnestly. I was taken by surprise at the moment, and could only echo—"she is young, too young." "Too young?—yes—you think I ought not——." "My dear sir," I said, collecting my ideas, "I speak not yet advisedly. This is new to me, and it is a question I am not prepared to answer. Believe me, I have every confidence in you, and should, with more than pleasure, see my dear child placed under such protection, in such a home, and with such a guardian. But, as I said before, she is very young. Will it not be better to wait? It would be injustice to fetter her yet, with an engagement, with a weight of duty for which she is no more prepared than a bird just fledged, for a long arduous flight. You must give her time. Let her walk a little longer, a little further, from the confines of her home. But let her still feel your friendship and kindness. She knows you, and I may say she appreciates you. But the heart will have its own way; and a heart like hers will take the right way. Let it alone for awhile. In another year, let us, if you will, resume the subject. I have spoken quite openly." "As you think right," he answered, "in another year; by that time her cousin, of whom she speaks much, will have returned?" "I understand you," said I, "he is considered and

loved by her quite as a brother, and it was her father's wish that this feeling should continue. You have nothing to fear there." "I dare not allow myself to hope," he said; "it is too much of happiness to anticipate. For I would be loved, Mr. Hamilton, not as many men are content to be loved; I must be loved for myself, and from the deep soul of another—in truth, entirely, and for ever." Here we reached the outer gate, where we shook hands cordially, and parted—my heart, I confess it, keenly solicitous for my friend's happiness, as well as for that of my dear Ethel. He is so excellent, so charming a person—why may not Ethel love him—you smile—why not, I say? Any woman might love him, love him in his own way too, and be proud of his affection. God grant she may love one as worthy of her, whoever he may be!

XI.

Edward to Ethel.

Florence, July 20th.

I wrote to you last from Naples, dearest Ethel, and since then we have seen much, and I need hardly say I have thought much of you and wished for you. We went to Pompeii and Baia, afterwards to Amalfi and Sorrento; but the weather growing too warm to stay longer in that southern air, we are come to this beautiful Vale of the Arno, now rich in the gorgeous splendour of an Italian summer's day. You would have been delighted to see Pompeii, and yet it is not a lively pleasure one feels in such a scene, but more of wonder and a thoughtful interest. The whole appearance of the place is ghost-like, a strange resurrection, as it were, of a thing dead—a voice from a grave, a form of other ages, wearing the very robes in which it then lay down and was buried. But the beaming, cheerful, deep blue sky, the sparkling sapphire sea, the fresh green of the straggling trees growing here and there among the debris of stones and lava, these hold the mind to what is present, and of our own world, and perhaps add to the novelty and peculiarity of the scene. Past and Present seem here to have met and taken hands, and looked into each other's face. Here was the riant beauty of the youthful summer of this our day, smiling on the pale mummy-like type of a former one. At first I felt in a dream, but we began our examinings, and lionizings, and this soon recalls one from dreams. The lower stories of many houses are entire, with decorations, but slightly injured in the lapse of time. These you can read of, and they have been so often described that I need not detail. I was sorry to find the most perfect of the frescos and mosaics carried away to the Museum at Naples; if it were possible to preserve them as they stood, Pompeii would retain so much more of its visible interest. For, after all, it is quite a different thing to look at the work of a past age in a modern museum, and to see it where it was originally placed by the Artist's hand.

Our excursion to Baia was very amusing; we went by land; by Cuma, and the lonely lake Avernus, and the oyster island at Fusano, where, in spite of your hatred of oysters, you would have been highly entertained. There is a great trade in oysters carried on, and on the little island a summer-house called "the King's Palace," where people go to eat these delicacies, *con amore*,—"oysters at home," full of salt water. At Baia are some fine ruins of a Temple of Venus, almost close to the sea-side, "the bluest of seas," beautiful from every point. We went on to Cape Misenum, near which are shown the prisons of Nero's Villa, and, coming back, saw the hot baths of Nero—felt them too. The heat was excessive. It was a very singular place; a long gallery in the rock, leading to these baths, terminates in a hot saline spring, which is said never to vary in depth, whatever quantity is taken away. We saw too the Grotto of the Cumæan Sybil, and the Grotto del Cane, and everything else that everybody sees, and which guide-books tell all about. Coming back from Naples, northwards, we stopped at Terracina, where I spent a delightful day wandering about, and again at Mola di Gaeta, longing for you, dearest Ethel, by the shores of that delicious sea. A thousand thanks for your letter which I found at Rome on my return. I am delighted to hear you are well and happy, that Eleanor has been with you, and that you have so pleasant a neighbour at Buckstead, which is a great thing for your mother. I shall stay here some time, and we shall go on with our reading. I must not come back too soon, but my heart "wearies" for a sight of you. Do you think time flies quickest to the traveller, or to the stay-at-home? I think to the latter, that is to you, for we see so much, and go to so many different places, that it doubles time in looking back. But, absent or present, I have always the delightful consciousness of your affection. I know no time nor distance can diminish or

alter that. Some day or other I must bring you to Italy; how happy we should be together here, laying up stores of pleasant recollections for future years in our still happier and dearer English home. What a triumph it would be if we could persuade Mr. Hamilton to come too! I should not wonder at all. Tell him so, and see how he will laugh. What fun we should have!

XII.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Longbrooke.

You and I have spent a long time together lately, my dear sister, and I believe we are not yet tired of each other's company; indeed you made me so snug and happy last winter, that I have a strong inclination to spend the next with you. What say you? Will you be plagued with the old bachelor another winter? And Ethel and her mother shall come and spend Christmas with us, if they will. You have not seen her now for a long time, and she is grown a woman, a delightful woman, heart and soul, and as fond of her godfather as she was at eight years old, a pretty child.

Edward's return being delayed thus long, instead of taking place, as Ethel hoped, early last May, was rather a disappointment to her; but now, on the eve of receiving him at home once more, everybody and everything at Longbrooke looks gay and happy. Even the fat old spaniel grows frisky, as Ethel strokes his ears, and talks of Edward; and Playfellow, the favourite, bounded and curvetted under her light hand this morning, more gaily even than is his wont; but it is the dear child herself who puts the spirit into everything. She took me such a long dancing walk yesterday, that my old bones are quite stiff, though we stepped along at such a pace I could hardly believe we had gone so far.

Sir Charles Herbert will very soon return from his three months' absence abroad.

I was interrupted, yesterday, by a cry of delight, as Ethel passed my room, sprang down stairs, and ran out through the hall-door. I guessed the cause and followed; and there indeed she was, clasped to the breast of as fine a young fellow as ever met my eyes; such a picture! both of them grown and matured, and so like each other, you might have sworn they were brother and sister. I could have cried, in the midst of all, to see their joy, it was so innocent and heart-warm. "Dear Edward!" Ethel kept saying, looking at him with pride, and he kissing her again and again, and holding her fast beside him, even while he greeted others. I thought of poor Beauchamp, and his fears, and the promise, and for a moment I trembled; but it was only for a moment—with them, listening to their voices, watching their smiles, their perfect friendship, who would not have felt easy, confident of all being right and happy, and, in short, as we would have it! The day was so fine too, earth and sky seemed to sympathise with the joy. In the evening we walked to the dell, and they talked calmly of the past, and of their father, for such he was to both. And then, after tea, trunks were unpacked, and boxes that had arrived before the traveller opened; and beautiful things for Ethel and her mother displayed. The room was like a bazaar, and Ethel's delight was unbounded—now her little feet are in Turkish slippers; now she has an eastern scarf thrown over her white shoulders, and now a dainty little Swiss hat on her brown curls. He looked so proud and gratified to see her pleased! They dressed me up at last, and after being nearly choked in a French hussar's jacket, and having my wig twitched off under a Turkish Fez, I sounded a retreat and made for bed.

I thought I was up before them this morning, but from my window I see them on the terrace, he fastening a Roman head-dress of folded linen and lace upon her head, and she bending, laughing, under his hands. My dear sister, you will think me crazy; but if you could only see these dear creatures, you would understand me better. Now to breakfast. Adieu! I shall only remain here the week, and then return home, whence I will write again.

P.S.—These children will be the death of me! Nothing will satisfy Ethel, but we must have the horses out, and ride, and show Edward how well they have been kept—rather too well, to please me. If there is extravagance here, it is in oats and beans, to judge by the capering of these horses. It must be looked to.

XIII.

Sir Charles Herbert to Mr. Hamilton.

Buckstead.

Dear Mr. Hamilton,—More than a year has passed since you and I held a conversation, the result of which, decided by yourself,

doubtless wisely, led me to adopt a course of conduct which I trust will issue now in the fulfilment of my earnest wishes. Yet, while I write this, the great uncertainty of success, the fear lest I overrate my own power, and, above all, my conscious unworthiness to receive so great, so unutterable a blessing as the heart of Ethel, makes me at times doubt, even despair; and I feel that I ought scarcely to attempt to soar to a height, from which I may be destined only to fall.

I returned a few days since from my three months' tour, but, with the exception of that time, I have, during the past year, seen much of your friends. I have watched Ethel's mind opening to maturity; in some slight degree I have myself directed it, and I have been surprised by the depth and clearness and grasp of her intellectual powers, and charmed by the candour and modesty which blends with them. Mentally, I feel assured that I have wherewith to gratify and interest her,—with me her intellect shall have full scope and nourishment, her tastes shall be gratified, every favourite pursuit seconded and aided, her affections shall find a full sphere for action, and old early affections shall be sacred and cherished. Her home shall be one of peace and love,—a heart devoted to her, how entirely devoted I will not say, ever watching to bless her—ceaseless prayers for her happiness, ceaseless endeavours to promote it, these shall be around her night and day. Yet these, oh, Mr. Hamilton, all these cannot lure the being who does not love! At this thought I tremble, but I would not it were otherwise. However she decide, I shall honour and love her still. She will not come to me without a heart; she is not what I believe her, if she could. If she consent to be mine, in perfect faith, and with measureless bliss, I will take her to my arms. At last, I come to the object of this letter, which is to request you to communicate with her mother; and then, sanctioned by her, I will go to Ethel—from her lips or from her hand, alone, I must receive my sentence.

XIV.

Ethel to Mr. Hamilton.

Longbrooke.

You bade me write to you very soon, dearest Padre, and it is not a fortnight since you left us; so you see I am your own good child yet; "very docile," as Edward says of the great Newfoundland dog, when he goes tearing away among my flowers! Eleanor came to us last week. Edward thought her much improved, and very handsome; she was not quite in such glorious spirits as usual, but we had a very merry meeting, and she looked so surprised when she saw Edward, (almost shy for her,) that I could not help laughing. The day before yesterday, Sir Charles Herbert arrived at Buckstead, and next morning surprised us at breakfast. Hush, listen, very close, for I'm whispering. When he came in, Eleanor was talking very earnestly to Edward, about something or other, and Sir Charles's eye fell upon her with such an unusual expression, she blushed so deeply, face, neck, even hands, blushed crimson, and then I felt the colour stealing over me too, and we all looked so foolish, except Edward, who never seemed to notice it. But I did, and it was with pleasure—shall I tell you why? I think Sir Charles likes Eleanor, and what a cheerful, animating, charming wife she would be! Sometimes, indeed, her spirits are almost overpowering, but he requires a companion who has enough for herself, and some to spare for him. Dear good Sir Charles, we were delighted to see him again.

This afternoon we all rode together. You can fancy us, how gay and happy we were—riding all four abreast in the fields below Longbrooke, Eleanor on Playfellow, I on the pony. (Here is a specimen of our grave conversation)—*Eleanor*—What a delicious day! *Edward*—Women are always talking about the weather! (*Eleanor* pouts, touches the horse on his ears, which he hates, and so he starts.) *I*—Do, Edward, tell us some of your adventures. *Edward*—I have told you all of them twenty times over, and you don't think them any adventures at all. You can't make an Othello of me, so I'll e'en say no more of my adventures. *Eleanor* (laughing)—Try again, you are not so black as the Moor. *Edward*—Nor you, I'm afraid, as soft-hearted as Desdemona. *Sir C.*—You don't know that. Surely we need not be all heroes or martyrs before these saucy dames will deign to look upon us! I assure you, Sir Charles was as gay as any of us, and looked quite young; we rode through the park at Buckstead, and Eleanor thought it never looked so rich and beautiful. The tints of autumn are on the woods, just slightly gilding the green here and there. I never can decide which of the seasons I love the best—yet I always incline to "mellow autumn." It is not, though, that any season is merely

dependent on its visible influences, to recommend itself to us—it is that we cast a beauty over it from our own hearts when it seems so delicious as this did. Everything was so bright, so delightful around us—and Edward by my side—always, always beside me. Oh, my dearest Mr. Hamilton! I was happy long ago, but it was not a happiness like this—there is a gladness in the depths of my soul, a spring of joy welling up, ever fresh, exhaustless; and the more I consume it, the more it supplies. It sheds a glow on all around me—my mother's face looks brighter, my flowers all beam with beauty, my occupations are all full of interest, my books delightful, my mind eager and active. And it is since Edward came—Edward, my beloved brother, I have now a companion, an affectionate sympathising friend. He will not leave us again, he says, for some time. I am sure it is true that, for the young, there must be communion and sympathy with the young, for entire happiness—with us there is such a constant interchange of similar thoughts and similar hopes; we look onward to the same future—back upon the same past—how gratefully, how joyously, I need not tell you. Yet we miss you much, and wish for you continually; you, dear Mr. Hamilton, who so kindly enter into all our ways and feelings. Yes, believe me it is true; though we are, indeed, very very happy, your presence has always made our pleasures greater, and when we had sorrows, our sorrow less. Good-bye. God bless you.

XV.

Eleanor Osborne to her Father.

Longbrooke, September.

Dearest Papa,—It is an age since I've written, and now I've only time for a few lines; but you know I'm always well, and that I've nothing particular to say. This is, without exception, the most charming place in the world, and we have such glorious days! Since Edward Beauchamp came home, nobody seems to think of anything but enjoyment. Mrs. B. (who, to say the truth, is rather triste and stupid, a little bit of a bore sometimes,) looks quite frisky; and Ethel, who is provokingly good in general, is almost as gay as I am myself. She is a dear girl, very sweet and kind, and lovely, but not the creature I should fall in love with if I were a man. She's too good. Edward is a very delightful person. They are a very nice brother and sister. I don't think they ever will be anything more. If I mistake not—but this you are not to breathe, or I'll never forgive you, Mr. Papa—Ethel will be invited to become Lady Herbert of Buckstead! Now, if you go and say anything, or write about it, I'll *never* tell you one of my secrets again. I was rather glad when old Hamilton went. He's a good soul, too, but I'm not fond of the ancients; you're the only old man I ever cared about—small blame to me! And they made so much of him here, I got quite sick of hearing his cautions and frights whenever we did anything out of the common way.

I certainly thought he was spilt one day! The pony gave such a start, it jumped nearly across the road. Ethel was in terror; I laughed so, and made my horse caper after him. It was very wicked of me, but if he only had got a good roll, without being hurt, what fun it would have been! Must I come home next week? Write and say. And now, in haste, good-bye, with love and a kiss, dear old Papa.

Your "naughty girl,"
E. F. O.

XVI.

Sir Charles Herbert to Mr. Hamilton.

Buckstead.

I write to you, my good friend, rather to give a gratifying and congenial occupation to myself, than because I have aught to impart of decisive import; yet the last days are not without their history. I have been often at Longbrooke, often near her—the being in whose life I feel my own is now bound up, whose fate, whether linked to mine or not, must influence it so deeply as to decide it. I have walked with her, conversed with her alone, one absorbing idea lying as it were upon the motions of my heart, making it throb heavily, though all tenderness for her, and I dare not ask of her an answer to that ever-starting question—"Child, beautiful child!—Angel!—Art thou mine?" Once it trembled on my lips. We were walking alone towards Longbrooke, from the cottages near, where the gentle creature had been on some visit of kindness and bounty. She was asking my advice about some poor boy for whom she is interested, and telling me her plans for him. After talking of it some time, I said, "this is very kind of you, Ethel." "Oh," she answered quickly, "what pleasure can equal that of making others happy? There is no merit in doing so." "Would you extend your kindness to me, Ethel? would you make

me happy?" I asked. "Yes, always, dear Sir Charles," she said, with such a smile, the very sunshine of kindness, and putting her hand in mine, with the frankness of a child. I could not disturb the happiness of the moment, it was too blessed a repose to break—in another instant, by another word, I might dispel the heavenly serenity, the sweet confidence expressed in her whole demeanour, and I would not; in her it was sacred, to me it was precious. We walked on awhile in silence, then she gently withdrew her hand, and stooped to gather some honeysuckle that trailed beside the path. I asked her to give it to me when we parted—it is in my bosom now.

Mr. Hamilton, I write to you thus, as I could write to no other man on earth. I do not fear either your smile or your frown; for you know her of whom I write; you know the earnestness and truth of my heart, and you are the last to ridicule that which is honourable and pure. I write to you without reserve, and soon you shall hear from me again. But I ought to ask you to pardon me for troubling you with my lonely cares. I have to thank you much for your already-given kindness and sympathy, which, indeed, is my encouragement, and must be my apology for intruding upon it so far.

XVII.

Mr. Hamilton to Ethel.

I was delighted, my dear child, to receive your letter, in which you give me such a lively picture of your present enjoyment; and, moreover, pleased me so much by saying that you wish sometimes for your old friend to share your pleasures. You are quite right, my dear, in what you say about young companions; I like to see the young together, their happiness is so natural and right. It is always a pity when a young person has not a companion of his or her own age, in whom to confide, and with whom to share the happiness and the anxieties of life. With a brother so kind as Edward has always been to you, so affectionate and sincere, you are very happily provided for in this way, and Eleanor, too, is a warm-hearted happy-tempered creature, with whom to enjoy many social pleasures, though her character, perhaps, is not of that nature to induce a very sacred and lasting confidence. But, altogether, I do not know any one whose earthly lot seems brighter than your own. Be grateful, moderate in your enjoyments, chastened in your hopes, in the midst of a happiness and prosperity that might tend to enervate, if prudence and watchfulness be not exercised with corresponding zeal. But I need not preach to my dear Ethel. She knows what duty is. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

I have a letter, too, from your mother, in excellent spirits; thank her for it with my best regards. I dare say you have been playing fine pranks since I left you, but do take care of yourselves. Some people are rather too fond of dangerous *Playfellows*. Tell Edward that all my wrath will be poured out upon him if anything happens. I must confess, I was relieved to find myself behind my good sister's old coachman, and her lazy pair of greys, and to stroll quietly about on my own legs, instead of having to exercise my renowned horsemanship. It is so true, as to be asserted in Scripture, "a horse is a vain thing for safety."

My sister sends you her love and thanks for the seeds. I told her your message about that plant, the name of which I confess I forgot, so I wish I had let you write it down. I told her it was a sort of blue daisy, and she says she understands. There is a fine plant of "that pink thing" here—the Oleander—(there's for you!).

This is a sweet little spot—not so beautiful as Longbrooke, but charmingly retired and rural; and my sister is quite your rival in making me comfortable and happy. I was very glad to get here, for you know I was not well when I left you, with tendency to asthma; and I was sat upon by a very fat woman in the coach, and almost squeezed to death; her husband was sitting opposite to me, but he knew better than to ask me to change places! No doubt the worthy man profited by experience. However, I darted out in desperation, after enduring it for two stages, and was glad to get relief and an outside place, at the expense of catching extra cold, which I certainly did after the heat I had been in. However, I'm better, thank God. I saw a tall boy get into the coach, into my place; but he too, after sitting there for three stages, came out again, quite in a perspiration. She certainly was an awful travelling companion. It was quite a refreshment to my eyes to behold my dear thin little spinster here.

I am very glad that Sir Charles Herbert is often with you. You may derive more than

pleasure from his society. I know no one more calculated to delight and instruct you, no one for whom I entertain a higher regard and admiration. He and Edward will, I am sure, always be excellent friends. Write to me again very soon, my dear child, and always remember that I am interested in everything, however trivial it be, that concerns you. I shall not see you again till next year, so you must gratify me by writing often and fully.

XVIII.

Ethel to Mr. Hamilton.

Longbrooke.

Dear Mr. Hamilton,—come to your child—father you are to me, come quickly—yet not till I have told you all—perhaps then you will not come at all, you will cast off for ever your wretched Ethel, you will leave her to remorse—despair! Can you? No—no—you cannot leave me, I believe that you will come—who but you, and God himself, can snatch me from this sin and sorrow? So do not leave me—read this with patience if you can. I will try to write calmly as I ought—for you must know all, but my brain is in a whirl, and the paper dances before my eyes.

Last night, oh our happy, happy evening! he asked me to come this morning to the dell. I did. I went with an innocent heart. I said my prayers, I prayed to God to bless him and my mother—and you, and all who are so good to me—shall I ever pray again as I did then?—never, never, never.

I went—he was there—I bade him good morning, I gave him his sister's kiss—that kiss, his every morning since I was an infant—he clasped me closely to his breast, he held me there with a strong grasp—kiss me again, Ethel! again—my cousin, my love, my wife! I don't know whether I spoke, I forget if I did, what I said—but every word of his is written on my memory with a finger of fire. My first impression was astonishment, fear. I thought he was suddenly distracted. I struggled from his arms, and said, Edward! my brother! and looked up into his face. Then, then, the tempter came—then was I first unfaithful to my sacred vow. He bent his eyes upon me, and I did not fly—he spoke, and for a moment more I listened—and in that moment I felt life change to me—all was over—hope, love, peace, gone for ever. A veil fell from my sight, all my soul was his, and his I could never be. Again, I heard his pleading voice, but I turned and fled from him. I rushed away, but not home again, I don't know where, for I recollect no more till I awoke in this room to misery and remorse. Forgive me! I am unworthy of you, of the parent I lost, unworthy of all who love me. But do not forsake me, be kind to me in my sorrow, and come.

I can write no more. My hand trembles, and my head throbs. I long for tears to wet my cheeks, but they will not come. But I shall be better soon; when you are with me, I shall have more courage, and perhaps see some light through this thick darkness.

XIX.

Mr. Hamilton to Ethel.

Be calm, my dear child. I will be with you as soon as possible, very soon after you get this. I will never forsake you, do not fear it. All this is very unfortunate. However, we must be firm. Don't fret, and believe me, under all circumstances.

Your affectionate godfather.

XX.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Longbrooke.

This is truly a changing scene. Here was I a few weeks ago, all about me full of happiness and ease, and here am I now in the midst of anxiety and pain; dear Ethel in her bed, feverish and ill, Edward in a state of the most tormenting uneasiness, and the mother looking wretched. It is as I have long feared—the interdict proves fatal, fatal to the happiness of two loving hearts. He loves her, and would wed her; she loves him, and can never wed him. She flies him on the first discovery of their feelings. He wonders and cannot divine the meaning, and is miserable about her illness, and in the meantime, to add to our perplexity, Sir Charles Herbert comes forward as the suitor of Ethel!

My dear sister, I never was so perplexed and troubled in my life. I had forsworn having anything to do with love affairs, since saucy little Fanny, some thirty years ago, asked me if I were serious! I was not half so serious then, I do believe, though it was my own concern, as I am now—everybody's confidante—three half crazy lovers depending upon me—imagine my situation! I have just had the strangest interview with poor Ethel. I had passed a great part of yesterday in her room, endeavouring to keep her as

quiet as possible, and to-day she wished and expected to be up. But she is still weak and ill, and I found her unable to rise when I went upstairs to her after breakfast.

As I passed through her dressing-room, a letter lying on the table unopened caught my eye. I took it up, and saw it was addressed to her in Sir Charles's hand. I guessed the contents, and paused a moment, hesitating whether I should give it to her then; and it struck me that it might possibly do her good by directing her thoughts from the one channel. I carried it to her bedside. "Here is a letter, Ethel," I said, "Oh, that letter; I had quite forgotten it," she replied. "I saw it lying there—a day or two ago, wasn't it? I forget everything. Give it to me; what is it?" She opened and read it, and I watched her changing face; first, its expression was surprise; then pain; then she laid it down without speaking, and closed her eyes, her poor weary eyes, to which the longed-for tears sprang at last, and have flowed abundantly. There she lay, quite still, and I waited silently. At last, she pushed the letter to me, and said, in a low tone, "Read it." I did; and a more manly, simple, touching appeal, in my opinion, was never written. "Would you wish me to answer it for you?" I asked, all the painfulness of the inevitable trial to him glancing across my mind. She did not answer. After a pause, I added, "You will tell me what you wish, or how I can assist you." My voice seemed to startle her; she raised herself up in bed with sudden energy. "Yes, yes!" she cried; "write to him at once, directly, and tell him I will be his wife!" I was thunderstruck; I could only look at her in astonishment. "Go," she continued, "go, my dear Mr. Hamilton; I will get up; I must not lie here if I am to live, and to do the work of life." "What do you mean, my child?—what are you thinking of?" "That I must put myself out of my own power," she replied, with decision: "I will become his wife, and bind myself by vows that cannot be broken." "You are wrong, Ethel," I said: "consider what you do. This is the refuge of weakness. Stand firmly, and face your dangers and temptations. Above all, do not so unjustly by another; one so noble, so trusting as this man, this good man, who offers you with feelings like these, his heart and hand." "Oh, my God!" she cried, clasping her hands together, "let me not make another heart unhappy. No, I will not be unjust to him. Listen,—understand me; he says that there is no sacrifice he will not make for my happiness; and once his wife, there is none I will not make for his. I will be devoted,—I will try to be all a wife should be. He shall never know this sad story." "But he ought; there you are wrong, Ethel." "No," she answered; "then it were indeed out of my power to make him happy, and to work out for myself that which may in the end redeem the past. I will devote my life to a new being, to new duties, to a new home." "You over-rate your power. How can a woman do all this, unless her heart is happy and at ease?" "A strong will, and God's help, can do anything," she said, in a low determined tone. "And Edward?" I ventured to say. "I shall see him," she replied quickly; "see him, or write to him soon,—to-day—directly." She was very much excited, and I besought her to be still. I told her I could not think of sending such an answer to Sir Charles, at present; that she would be acting unjustly, unwisely. We must take time, and, in the meanwhile, I would let him know that his letter was received, and would be answered on her recovery.

To-day the medical man feared there was an accession of fever, and this conversation I have had with her confirms his opinion in my mind. I am sure she was over-excited. Her illness calls forth the greatest sympathy, all love her so much. Edward is anxious and restless. A very short conversation passed between us yesterday, in which I told him that I was aware of what had passed; that it had been too much for Ethel, who had been accustomed so long to regard him as a brother, and to feel for him the affection of a sister. "But this must all be changed now, my dear sir," he said, earnestly. "If she loves me as I love her, we shall be happier, far happier, than we have ever been. This illness is most unfortunate; I greatly fear I was too abrupt, too earnest." (It was he who carried her into the house, when he found her lying insensible at some distance from the dell, where she turned away to fly from him.) "My dear Edward," I rejoined, "don't rely with too great certainty on the fulfilment of your wishes. Ethel tells me she will see you or write to you very soon. We must have patience, and wait till it is quite safe for the dear girl to exert herself."

Thus I am obliged to talk to them, as composedly as I can, while all the time my mind is perplexed to the greatest degree. I do think

Edward ought to be made acquainted with the whole state of the case, and then he will at once understand it; painful as it may be, it were better done. Yet poor Beauchamp, his uncle, particularly enjoined that the mortifying story of his poor mother's wretchedness should never be disclosed to him. Indeed, I know not what to do. May Providence order all things for the best! I have no one here to consult. Ethel especially requested that her mother might be spared the pain of this disclosure from Edward; and as she is already acquainted with Sir Charles's intentions, and likes him exceedingly, all her thoughts run that way; and she is very desirous that her daughter should return a favourable answer to his letter. Altogether we are in an *embroglio*, from which I don't yet see the way out. I must exercise myself the patience I try to impose on others. That Ethel must have spoken under the excitement of fever, I am persuaded, for she is quite wrong, unlike herself, and takes an exaggerated view of her own case.

Eleanor, whom Mrs. Beauchamp has rather prematurely admitted to her confidence concerning Sir Charles, is in the highest spirits, such as seem to me both unnatural and unkind, considering that Ethel is suffering so much. I heard her say to Sir Charles to-day, when he called to make his usual anxious inquiry, that Ethel had been out too long in the night air one evening, and caught a feverish cold, which made her very weak. I don't know whether she really believes what she says; if she does, I applaud her penetration.

Now, adieu! This is a long letter; but I feel so grateful that I have one in whom I may confide, that I go on writing, forgetting that you have to read it all. However, I feel sure that my subject interests you, though you may be tired of my prosing about it.

XXI.

The Same.

Longbrooke.

You would receive my last a day or two ago, and doubtless you are anxious to hear how we have been going on since. Worse and worse. Yesterday morning, as I came down to breakfast, I was surprised to meet Ethel on the stairs, dressed as usual, but looking very pale; and her hair, instead of hanging in its usual curls, was plainly braided over her brow. She spoke to me in her usual tone, without seeming to notice my surprise, save by a silent pressure of my hand, and we entered the breakfast-room together. I drew her arm under mine, for, as I opened the door, I saw her face and lips so deadly white, that I was afraid she would faint. Mrs. Beauchamp, and Eleanor, and Edward, were there. All uttered an exclamation of joyful surprise; Edward started up, and, seeing Ethel, a tender touching delight beamed in his face, and he hastened towards her. She trembled all through her slight frame; but with wonderful firmness she met him, took his hand in both hers, as he kissed her, and she said, "You see I am getting quite well again." "Dearest Ethel, how happy I am; but you are very weak yet; sit down—here, take your own old favourite place—sit beside me." How she bore it I don't know, but she did sit down as usual beside him, and tried to eat. I saw it was a hard task. Yet there was nothing about her, except her uncommon paleness, and an expression about her eyes, a look of pain, though they were very bright, that was different from her ordinary appearance. She talked, perhaps, more quickly than usual (for you know she had a slowness of enunciation peculiar to her); she asked about her plants, her birds, her horse, eager to divert attention from herself. When breakfast was over, she rose, and was leaving the room. "Dear Ethel, might you not venture to take a turn in the garden?" asked Edward. "It is such a fine autumn morning; just the weather you like." "No," she said, gently; "I am going to write some letters; I will be down again about noon." There was unutterable anxiety in the expression of his face as his eyes followed her; he turned his glance for an instant on me and on Mrs. Beauchamp, then opened the window into the garden, and went out. I sauntered out, too, after a little while, for it was a delicious morning, the thin white mist rising off the uplands, and the woods glowing out in their rich autumnal colouring, under a cloudless sky.

I returned to the house, hoping to induce Ethel to come out and enjoy the refreshing air, and as I went upstairs I received a message to go to her in her dressing-room. There she sat, two letters folded before her, and her face hidden in her hands. She did not at first notice my entrance, and I heard her murmur in a low tone, "If I have done wrong, God forgive me!" Poor dear Ethel! I cannot but think she has done wrong, yet she does not see it, and is as firmly resolved on the course she has taken as ever was hero-warrior when he armed for battle. Well

—I sat down beside her, and took her hand in mine, and when she met my eyes, bent kindly upon her, she buried her face on my breast, and wept long, sobbing like an infant. I was grieved for her beyond expression, and not a word of comfort could I get out of my lips. With silent caresses I tried to soothe her. At last she raised her head, and dried her eyes. "Now, dear Mr. Hamilton," she said, "this is my last hour of weeping. Now it is all over, it must not be again. Do not be too kind to me, but help me to support myself and carry out these resolutions. I have not written these letters without considering all you said yesterday. I have thought long and deeply, and my resolution is unchanged. Something within me urges me to this step. To change all outwardly, as is inwardly changed, to begin, if I am to live, a new life." "But are you quite sure," I asked, "that you are not acting selfishly? We must think of others as well as of ourselves. Are you not now considering yourself most?" "Am I? God forbid! but no, you mistake me. I have thought of all, and willingly, oh, how willingly, would I sacrifice myself for others! But as binding, as imperative as that vow I took before my dying father in the sight of God, so binding and so urgent is now my duty to shun all temptation that may lead me from the performance of it. And for him—it is surely wise that I should leave the home where we have been so happy—he has no other, it is his. He must forget all but our early blissful childhood. He must bring another to share the future years." She paused, and I was silent. I was struck with her calmness and decision. "But for Sir Charles Herbert," I urged again. "For him, too," she replied, "I have thought and prayed. Oh, how earnest have been my prayers to Heaven that I might wrong no heart in this! To him I will be ever faithful, ever devoted. Already have I schooled myself to the task of sacrifice. Day after day it will become easier, and duty, if Heaven help me, may at last be happiness, enduring happiness. I know him, and you know him, dear Mr. Hamilton; he is noble, generous, truthful; I feel that on his affection I may rest, in his protection I may safely take refuge. He must be twice my age, and more," she added, with a faint smile, in which the endeavour to be cheerful contrasted painfully with the colourless lips; "he will take care of poor Ethel, and you need not fear for me." "But, my child, think you he would have a wife without a heart?" "No!" she exclaimed, "nor is it so. Is it not enough that mine reveres him affectionately, looks up to him, and trusts him?" "Ethel," I said frankly, "I never married, but I was once in love, and I don't think this would have satisfied me in a wife." She was silent. "I still think you are mistaken; but you are resolved. You are acting from what you feel to be a right and virtuous motive, and as such I honour your decision, and pray fervently that you may be supported in the difficult path you have marked out for yourself." "Yes," she said, "I feel that I am right, and I doubt not I shall be strengthened for my duty. Here, now, are the letters. I confide them to you, and wish you to read them both, and then deliver them." I took the letters with a sigh; she saw my momentary hesitation, and continued: "Do not be uneasy. My task is begun, and my courage rises. The struggle has been bitter, but it is over with the decision. Leave me now, and I will rest a little." "May God bless and assist you," said I, leaving her. "We must look in faith to the result. It is in wiser hands than ours. If you are resolved, so be it—I will obey you and deliver your letters."

My dear Sister, is not all this strange and sad? I left the letter in poor Edward's room, and now he sends for me. And it is post time, so I close this.

XXII.

Ethel to Sir Charles Herbert.

If the devotion of all my future life can make you happy, it shall be yours. I answer you as you bid me, according to the dictates of my own heart, and I will ever be,

Your faithful ETHEL.

XXIII.

To Edward.

My beloved brother, when you took me to your arms and asked me to be your wife, you did wrong; but you did it not knowingly, and I love you not the less. It can never be. I have promised to be the wife of another. I am going soon to leave you, and my mother, and this beloved home, and I trust to your generosity, your kindness, to your affection, that for the time we may be still together you will let it be like the precious past; and that we may be what we always were to each other, but no more.

To my dying hour I shall love you and

bless you; whatever the future brings, it can never lessen my attachment to you, my dearest brother. And I pray God to be with you, to calm your soul, and make you happy; and that you may look kindly and forgivingly on one who has caused you, unconsciously, such pain as this. As you love me, be calm and firm, and we may again be happy together. Well do you know that to see you otherwise would destroy my peace, and well do I know that you would give no pain, willingly, to

Your ever affectionate sister,

ETHEL.

XXIV.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Longbrooke.

To go on from my former letter. I went directly to Edward in the library. Mrs. Beauchamp and Eleanor were coming in from the garden in earnest conversation, as I passed through the Hall. The latter cast her eyes upon me, with a peculiar anxious expression, suspicious and questioning. I appeared not to notice, and went on; my thoughts were full of poor Edward.

He approached me in an eager impetuous manner, and drew from his bosom a letter, which I saw was Ethel's. "Do you know this, Mr. Hamilton? Have you read it?" "Yes," I said, "I have." He replied, "I don't see why Ethel, why my sister," (laying emphasis on the word,) "should think it necessary to consult you or any one, in writing this letter to me." "She did not do so," I interrupted; "the letter was written without consulting me, or any one, that I am aware of." "It is painful," he rejoined, coldly and bitterly, "that it should be necessary for any third person to enter into the sanctity, if I may call it so, of such a communication. But we will let that pass. I would know now, and doubtless *you* can tell me, if the person to whom my—my ——" his agitation was too great—he paused. I begged him to be composed. I assured him how much I felt for him,—I would tell him all he wished to know, if I could,—"Sir Charles Herbert is the person to whom Ethel is engaged." "It is true then, all true?" he cried in a voice of agony, "and she is lost to me for ever—lost, lost!" He sunk upon a seat, he put his hand upon his heart, and groans, deep groans, burst from his breast. The sweat stood upon his brow in great drops, and for a few moments he closed his eyes, as if to shut out the world and his grief. I need not say how deeply moved I was. I stood silent and motionless—I dare not intrude upon his woe. Soon he started up. "Oh God!" he cried, "what a delusion! I have loved her all these years in vain. Mr. Hamilton, you don't know how I've loved her! She does not know—Heaven itself does not know, or surely—surely—surely this bitter cup never had been mine to drink!" I was still silent, and he turned to me hastily, "You have not been kind to me. You have taught Ethel to love another—yet she cannot love him as she would have loved me! Sir Charles Herbert is your friend. You have played us false, Mr. Hamilton, but beware! beware how you give away the young and lovely, beware how you mate youth and age." "God forbid," I cried with sincerity. "I do it not; but he is not old, not past the prime of life, and his heart is as warm as in its first summer of feeling." "I see it, I see it," he went on. "Ethel's nature is not cruel—this is not her own deed, unprompted, unsupported by others—you, her poor mistaken mother—even Eleanor, her friend! I see it all! Oh, has it come even into this once blessed home of ours, that cursed spirit of the world, that seeks to join wealth to wealth, that courts false happiness by proud alliance; that gives hand to hand, and cares not though the heart must starve? Can he, with his thousands, and his titles, and his wide-spread lands, make her happier than I would have made her, in the home of her youth—in the bowers of her childhood?—Oh Ethel! Ethel! this is not thy work!" He started up, and paced the room rapidly. "No," I said, "Ethel is not cruel, and since you do her this justice, I will not complain now of your injustice to myself." Just then we saw at a little distance Sir Charles Herbert riding towards the house. A shudder seemed to pass over poor Edward's frame, as he turned from the window, and our eyes met. "I shall leave a letter with Ethel. I shall place it myself in her own hands, and then I shall go from home for a short time. I have a call to London, which happens fortunately just now. My company can be welcome to none, very unwelcome to some,"—what scorn and bitterness curled his lip!—"I see you expect a visitor, good morning." I could not be angry with him, poor fellow, but he was very angry with me. I could but admire him as he left the room, commanding himself by a strong effort, his step and bearing firm and noble, but his dark

hair disordered, his lips pressed together, his eyes expressive rather of anger and indignation than the melting of sorrow.

While I was ruminating and regretting, and questioning within myself, if it were best to allow him to remain under the influence of his present views, and submit myself to a false imputation for the sake of my young friends, Sir Charles entered the room. He too was agitated, but how differently! In the words of the Poet, (you see I am growing romantic in these love affairs,)

"There was life in his footstep, and light in his eye."

Old! thought I—why he is a young man! and the tone of his voice, too, seemed new to me; there was a deep satisfied pleasure in it, though it trembled a little. "Is it possible, Mr. Hamilton," he said, "that this happiness is really mine?" "Nay, my dear Sir," answered I, "if you cannot believe Ethel, you will not believe me!" Such a close," he said, "to such a state of suspense, is almost too much to be real; the entire crowning of my hope, when it had sunk almost away; the sudden raising from something like despair, to the high certainty of bliss—can you wonder that I fear to believe? that I scarce know how to receive it as I ought?" "It is nevertheless true, my dear Sir Charles, and Ethel will, I trust, indeed I am sure, secure her own happiness in endeavouring to promote yours." "Oh, Heaven!" he exclaimed, "may I only make her as happy as she deserves to be!" He gave me a letter for her. (Imagine what a post-office I am become!) No doubt, no shade crossed him, he evidently trusted her entirely; he loves her himself in perfect faith, and in that spirit he receives her promise. I was touched to see this, and a feeling of self-reproach, as if I were deceiving him, crossed my mind. But if Ethel will have her own way, I can do no more, say no more. I hope matters may go straight now; but it is seldom that happy results follow if there is anything like concealment at the beginning, any false part to play. Yet, perhaps, I am speaking too strongly. I am sure of this, that Ethel is perfectly sincere in her intentions, and will act up to her principle, fully.

XXV.

Edward to Ethel.

Whatever you bid me do, Ethel, I obey you. I call you once more my sister, and I shall trouble you no longer with the prayer I made to you in the fulness of my hope, my confidence, (and surely that confidence was induced, ensured, by yourself!) that you would not deny it, that you would answer it in the same spirit, that, at least, you would listen—but you fled from me, fled in horror, as though I had wounded or insulted you! I was deluded, I had deceived myself; I had reposed too long on the certainty of that which I ought only to have hoped for, not expected. I did believe that you loved me as I loved you, and every fresh proof of your *sisterly* affection was to me an added token, a new assurance, that all was as I would have it.

Ethel! Ethel! I thought I read, ere you fled from me that morning, I thought I read my answer on that face whose language had never deceived me. I thought I saw—oh, how could I read it wrong?—a new expression of tenderness, a drooping passionate tenderness, in those soft eyes of thine! I thought I felt, as I clasped thee to my breast, thy heart's fluttering pulses answering to my own!—Ethel, if you love me, hide not the truth, be not unfaithful to your own soul. Have you, indeed, descended from that height where I have hitherto proudly beheld you, on the very throne of virtue, truth, candour, and constancy, have you descended at the beck of the world, obedient, at its first invitation, to the grovelling inducements of worldly aggrandizement? or at the cruel instigation of others, who paint to you, in false delusive colours, the propriety and prudence of this—this engagement you are making? Oh, Heaven! is this Ethel I am writing to—Ethel, who once seemed to me truth itself—whose candour once was shown in every act, every word—silently, on that white brow—and brightly, in the open glance of those clear eyes? Is it Ethel who has betrayed the heart that loves her, the heart that has beat for her, since it knew that it had life? I doubt my senses. Can it be? Alas! alas!

Do not mock me by telling me to be happy; bid the world be daylight when the sun has set, ask the blind man to behold—you ask what is impossible. You have destroyed my faith in goodness, you have made me doubt all I once believed, you have swept away the verdure and beauty that was in my path, and left me a dreary desert, a wretched, hopeless, gloomy way, henceforth to tread.

There was a beautiful star shining over me in my youth—there was a holy angel

whose presence elevated and sanctified my life, the thought of whose happiness was impulse to me—whose image smiled on my virtue, and would have wept over my sin. It is mine no longer—you have withdrawn from me, for ever, this blessed light. God forgive you, and those who have led you astray; bitter must be their retribution, comfortless their remorse! I will not pain you any longer by my presence; when you receive this, I am on the point of departure. Farewell. May you never know the misery of vain regret, of late repentance.

Ethel, Farewell!

XXVI.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Longbrooke.

I have your kind letter, in which you say so much that is comforting and encouraging to me in my present difficult position. You urge me to give Edward a full disclosure of former circumstances, but I judge it better as yet not to do so. Ethel was greatly affected, —I should rather say afflicted,—by his letter to her. She sent for me this morning, after passing a wretched sleepless night, and I then proposed, if she allowed me, to speak or write openly to Edward; but she was decidedly opposed to my doing so; she thinks he will sooner recover his peace of mind, and be able to bestow, hereafter, his affections on another, if he believes the step she is taking is entirely the dictate of her own feeling; if he knows that she is acting under a prohibition, that she possibly loves him, but dare not break her vow, his pain will not be less great, and he may continue almost involuntarily bound to her the longer. "Ah!" said I, "the pain, in one sense, may be as great, but it would be unmixed with distrust, suspicion, and the false impressions under which he labours now." "Let it be as it is," she persisted, "the blow is struck—he must bear it. I will bear it. Mine is a just punishment, and my repentance must now be worked out in my future life." I spoke to her kindly, and assured her that she took too serious a view of things, with regard to herself; that she had not sinned wilfully against her promise—that it was in very innocence the forbidden feeling had arisen—(what, indeed, could be more natural!)—that she was doubtless pardoned already in the sight of Heaven, and stood clear before the spirit of her father. She answered with humility and gentleness, and thanked me, adding, "I thought we had spoken of this yesterday for the last time, but this letter has revived too much. Nothing will now disturb us again, and we must talk of it no more." She did not leave her room for the rest of the day; but now she appears among us again, has wandered through her garden, and driven out with her mother, and talks of riding with Eleanor. Sir Charles Herbert was with us to-day for a long time. Those who know not, as I do, the events of the past week, would see, in her appearance, only the effects of recent illness. To me it is painful to see the efforts she continually makes to be cheerful. I turn away quite sick at heart, to see her smile. At the same time, I feel convinced that she will, in the end, be successful in her object; she acts from so pure and high a motive, that I cannot but look forward to an early renewal of her accustomed cheerfulness; serene she is already—pleased with, and grateful for, the affectionate tenderness of those around her; and Sir Charles Herbert, in the fulness of his happiness, seems to find only new cause for interest and admiration in the slight shyness and reserve of her manner to him. Now and then, for a moment, her own clear frank soul looks out through her gentle eyes, then suddenly, as it were, withdraws itself. None can read these signs as I do—none can pity her as I do; but she will be happy, she is so good that she must be happy!

Edward left us the other evening. I did not see him to speak to him again, but, as I was walking on the terrace, I heard the rapid tread of horses' feet, and I saw him, mounted on Ethel's favourite Playfellow, riding towards the gate that leads to the post-town. A servant followed with a portmanteau, and I knew he was gone.

The evening was gloomy, it was growing late, the peculiar moaning wind of autumn shook down the dead leaves around me—there was melancholy in the very air. I watched him as long as I could catch a glimpse of him, and listened to the horses' feet till the sound died away. He was gone. I went back into the house, where a cheerful fire blazed in the library. Eleanor was gazing from the window silently. Mrs. Beauchamp sat as usual by her little table, with her everlasting rug-work in her hands. The timepiece on the mantel-shelf ticked loudly in the quietness. I felt as if some one was dead and buried. In spite of the gleaming fire and the look of life, there was an indescribable gloom. Things

were changed—I felt it. I sat down and took a book; neither of the ladies spoke. Eleanor sighed, something unusual, and I looked at her; she began to work, and Mrs. Beauchamp fell asleep; and, at last, I did too, and slept till I was wakened up on a sudden by my book falling off my knee, and lights and coffee coming in. It was the dullest evening I ever passed in my life. As soon as Ethel is quite well again, I shall come and spend a month with you. Adieu!

XXVII.

Sir Charles Herbert to Mr. Hamilton.

Buckstead, November 18th.

Dear Mr. Hamilton,—I rejoice to hear you will be at Longbrooke next week, though it is but what I expected, that you should be with Ethel in the trying moments that approach. I call them trying, for, to a heart like hers, it is no light thing to part from such a home, and to enter on a new life. To every woman, under the happiest circumstances, such a momentous step must be fraught with all that is solemn and touching. I have heard people wonder that a bride should weep. Some, indeed, may be as deeply moved without the outward and visible sign; but to me it is strange and unnatural to see a woman, whose soul God hath made the dwelling of tenderness, of all the softest and sweetest emotions, pass unmoved, or with a usual demeanour, through such a scene, the most trying of her life. I believe Ethel is happy; I trust in God she is so; she assures me of it, and I have implicit faith in her assurance. That she looks seriously on the future, I cannot doubt; an anxious expression is often on her brow, and mingles with the soft tenderness of her eyes. She is paler, too, than I like to see her, and I think a complete change of air and scene, after our marriage, might be beneficial to her. What do you think of our passing the winter in Italy? I spoke of it to her, and the idea seemed to give her great pleasure. I promised to consult you, and make arrangements accordingly. Her mother does not object, and Eleanor has promised to spend some months at Longbrooke, after we are gone. If we go so far, we should proceed at once. Let me hear from you at your early convenience.

I have had one source of regret and uneasiness in Edward Beauchamp's long, and it seems to me needlessly protracted, absence from home. I have written to him, to beg he will gratify us by being present at our marriage, but he says he cannot be absent from town at that time, and promises to come down for a day or two previously. It is now two months since he left, and I fancy Ethel feels it not quite kind, she was always so warmly attached to him. I confess to you, I have been very uneasy about this—it struck me, very painfully, that my position here is unwelcome to him. I ventured to speak of it to Mrs. Beauchamp, (to whom I have always believed him as dear as a son of her own,) and she assured me at once, and unaffectedly, that there was nothing at all to induce any feeling of that kind on his part,—that his absence is one of necessity at present. His letters are always to her, never to Ethel, which again surprises me; but they are continually expecting him home, and don't depend on receiving letters. This passing shade over my otherwise unclouded happiness is, however, dispelled by the dear society of Ethel, and the evident pleasure and approbation of all around us; and it delights me to find her entering with so much interest and consideration into my plans for the future, my arrangements at Buckstead, all my pleasant hopes and prospects; already we roam about together in those scenes, now to me no longer lonely; already she enjoys what is mine, all, all her own; and, sometimes, I ask myself, How has it come to pass that I am thus happy—thus blessed? What have I done to deserve so rich a gift? so rich, that even yet a wild doubt of the reality of this dream of joy has darted across my overpowered heart? Once, before, I loved; once, in the first years of manhood, when to doubt was to be faithless, and to believe and hope was easy duty. And she I loved deceived me—she forsook me for another on the very eve of our marriage; ay, almost at the very steps of the altar. But why do I weary you with this dim vision of the past, when the future has in it all that is alluring, all that is hopeful and joyous?

God bless you, my good friend. From your hands, ere long, I shall receive my treasure, my beloved and sacred treasure.

XXVIII.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Longbrooke, November 28th.

I tell Eleanor it is much more fitting she should write you this letter, than that I should. How must an old man like me describe a

wedding and all its gay accompaniments? And Eleanor is in the highest spirits again, while I, on the contrary, feel somewhat sad and idle, and instead of writing to you this morning I fell asleep over my book, and perhaps shouldn't have written yet, but I dreamt you came into the room, took up my lazy pen, and walking up to me touched my hand with it; and I awoke, and stared to see my pen lying still in the inkstand, and myself alone in the room. However, I took the hint, got out of my easy chair with a stretch, seized the pen, in no very good humour, nibbed it crooked, wrote "My dear sister," made an immense blot, and, much disgusted, went down stairs, and out of doors. However, I begin now in earnest,—and go back a few days, to continue from my former letter.

Edward came at last, for a day or two—he said, but he only staid a day and night, and then went back; he said he was obliged to go — ay, truly he was obliged to go!—how could he have staid over that day? I was not in the house when he arrived in the afternoon, so I don't know how they met, but we got pretty well through dinner. Sir Charles, most fortunately, had been called away to see a friend who was very ill, and he left many messages, and great regrets that he could not meet Edward, but hoped he would stay, as he should only be a day or two away. While with us the poor fellow made an immense effort, so great that he almost overshot his mark, and appeared very much over-excited. I wondered that he came, but it was accounted for in the evening; I was sitting with Ethel in her dressing-room, when there was a hasty knock at the door, and he came in. Though there was but a dim light in the room, I saw the anguish of his face; he had cast off the false veil, he made no effort now—except to be sufficiently calm to speak. Ethel greeted him gently, and sweetly as ever—he told her he should be gone again in the morning before she was up. The tone of his voice, its deep despair, must have gone to her heart, but she was silent. Then he drew from his breast-pocket a case, and, opening it, took out something which gleamed in the half-light—it was the clasp of a bracelet made of hair, set with brilliants. "Give me your arm, Ethel," he said. She held it out to him; he fastened the bracelet on. "Your hair is woven there with mine. Wear it in memory of me and the years that are gone." His trembling hand lingered for a moment on the bracelet; she answered only by bending her head, and kissing that dear hand—then he suddenly caught her to his breast, moaned out, rather than spoke, Farewell!—and left us. Ethel sat mute, motionless—her eyes fixed upon the bracelet on her arm. In a few minutes I spoke to her. "Oh, Mr. Hamilton!" she said, "why does he try me so? in these few moments the work of months is all undone!" There was another pause. "Nay," she continued, more softly, "I must not blame him. He knows not the pain he gives, he has not motive like mine for endurance. No, dear Edword—this will I wear indeed, for my brother's sake." "Right, right, my good child," said I, comforting her, "it is only natural and kind that Edward should wish you to keep some little remembrance. Your godfather, too, won't be forgotten"—and out came some pretty trifles which had been in my pocket for two days, waiting a favourable moment to be presented. The dear girl smiled again, and was pleased, and made me happy with her loving thanks. We saw no more of Edward, and I confess I went to bed with an aching heart.

Well, I must hasten to the story of the wedding, for you, old lady, are dying all this time to hear about it; breakfast, dresses, and all the rest, how the bride looked, and whether she cried, whether the gentlemen kissed the ladies, and how many kisses the old bachelor got, and how large the wedding cake was, etc. God be thanked, I had never such an ordeal as being married to go through—it is a frightful ceremony, I always thought it was. I mean in the sense of frightening one. If they had ever attempted to perform it over me, I certainly should have disgraced myself by flight. I couldn't have stood it; no, not for the prettiest woman in England, saucy Fanny herself; so she saved me the trouble, and my character into the bargain. Excuse the digression.

It was such a morning for a bridal! I was awakened early by the sleet and rain beating against my window, and when I looked out all was mist and shadow. As the clock in the library struck ten, Ethel came down stairs with Eleanor and her mother. As to her dress, I only saw a great deal of thin white drapery of some sort hanging about her. (I know what you're saying, very well, "the provoking old wretch, he never noticed, though I did beg of him particularly.") It was all very pretty though; and my especial admiration was a wreath of myrtle round her

head, real myrtle from the hot-house at Buckstead. Her veil did not cover her face, but fell on each side. She looked quite calm, and there was a clear beautiful expression on her brow and in her eyes; something, if you understand me, of almost more than happiness, a serene elevation, and dignity, and repose, as if she felt sure all was right, and had a firm inward support sufficient for her. Mrs. Beauchamp brightened up and looked cheerful, and Eleanor very gay both in spirits and attire; so I was cheered too, and forgot how gloomy the weather was, and my half anger with myself, and I grew by degrees almost as lively as Eleanor, and the other young ladies who arrived to attend on our dear bride. Then we all went to church, where I had the special honour of escorting her. The sun just struggled out, but it was a poor attempt at sunshine, as we alighted from the carriage. All the party from Buckstead met us. If Ethel had faltered, she must have been re-assured by one glance at the face of him so soon to be her husband—full of happiness, affectionate tenderness, perfect satisfaction, perfect confidence.

There were tears on her cheeks, and her head drooped down a little, so that the veil fell over her face, as he led her from the altar. But I felt sure that I was giving her, under Heaven, into the best and wisest earthly care, and with this feeling it was that I placed her hand in his. So, I would say, ends my responsibility as her guardian, but virtually only. She is so dear to me that, whatever betide, her happiness must be a part of mine as long as I live.

They are gone,—to travel as quickly southwards as is consistent with Ethel's comfort; and I soon left the young party to make as merry as they could, and went up to my own room, intending to write to you; but I sat down to my little table, and there stood the white vase filled with fresh flowers, by her hand—I got melancholy again, fell to thinking, and there I sat ruminating, till I was summoned to attend the ladies.

I will write again in the course of the week. We hope Edward may return soon.

XXIX.

The Same.

Longbrooke, December 4th.

When we came down to breakfast this morning, we found Mrs. Beauchamp in the full enjoyment of reading a letter from Ethel; the dear child had slipped a little note for me into the letter, just to assure me she was "really well and happy." I believe her. God bless her! They were in London, and intended crossing from Dover next day.

Edward returned last night. I guessed he would not continue long absent. His aunt seemed delighted to have him back again, and Eleanor was very gay and pleasant, and his welcome was a hearty one, that of a son returning to his home, and enough to gladden any heart; but what was it to him! At first he seemed to feel the kindness, but after a few minutes were over he was sitting abstractedly by the fire, his hands on his knees, his head bent, his figure altogether like that of an old man, his eyes fixed on the flickering firelight; mine were fixed upon him, and suddenly they met his, as, with a slight start, he roused himself and looked up. "It is very cold to-night," he said, and drew his chair nearer to the fire. Just then Mrs. Beauchamp said, "Well, Edward, you don't ask what news of the travellers! Do you know that we have had letters to-day from Ethel herself? There was one inside mine, to Mr. Hamilton, and who knows but there was one in his to you!"

We have heard and read of people *writhing* under the torture of a painful question, or suddenly-stirred emotion; it is a hackneyed expression; but in this case no other word could express, and that faintly, the visible agony, the shudder, that passed slowly over his face, his person. He was rising from his seat, and, as he sat down again, his hands grasped the arms of the chair, his lips moved, but there was no sound. Not in all the scenes I have lately gone through had I felt so touched, so grieved. I could have seized Mrs. Beauchamp's arm, and shaken her, in my sorrow and anger; I wonder I did not; but her blindness was its own antidote, and to my inexpressible relief she exclaimed—"Why, my dear boy, you are quite benumbed with cold! We must have something hot directly. Do, Mr. Hamilton, ring the bell. I declare he must have been travelling outside all day!" She had her own way; he was unable, and I too glad of the relief, to contradict her; and he was treated as if it was the ailing starved body, and not the perishing heart that wanted aid and comfort. But it gave him time to recover—and the strong warm cordial did lend him a temporary support; and he took the letter in Ethel's handwriting into his hands, and turned his back

to the light, and seemed to read it. All the time did Mrs. Beauchamp go on talking about it, uttering again and again, in tones of pleasure, the words, the names, that went like so many daggers into his soul; and I, for the life of me, could not manage to turn the conversation, or stop her. My anxiety to do so absolutely froze my tongue. At last, Edward put down the letter, and rushed out of the room. "I am sure he is not well," said Mrs. Beauchamp, "I shall send for Dr. ——." "Do no such thing, my dear madam," cried I, almost angry; "you forget that Edward must feel the loss of Ethel very much. On this, his first return after her departure, he is sure to miss her." Thus much of the truth I told. Eleanor cast upon me again the inquiring suspicious glance I observed before. "Ah, true," rejoined Mrs. Beauchamp, her opaque sensibilities not the least the wiser, "we will wait and see how he is to-morrow." "Shall I make tea?" asked Eleanor; and so the subject dropped. Half an hour passed, and Edward did not come back. "I wonder where he is," prosed Mrs. Beauchamp; "tea will be quite cold." "I will call him," said I; and I took a light, and went up to his room; he was not there. I looked in the library, the dining-room—but he was not in the house. I looked out; it was a fine, frosty, moonlight evening. Hastily I put my coat on, and went out, alarmed. I called him, and walked quickly across the garden to the dingle. There was a rustic seat in that gravel walk, where she used often to sit; there I beheld him, kneeling on the ground, his head on the seat, and deep sobs—convulsive, passionate, smote my ear. I can't write about it; he repulsed me at first—but after some patience I got him back to the house. He seems better this morning, and things are as usual—that is, as you may imagine, after all I have told you; and I shall be heartily glad to leave Longbrooke for the winter months, and come to you. Mr. Osborne is coming to join his daughter here, for a few weeks, and I am only too happy to yield my post of companion, protector, etc., etc., to him. If Eleanor now chooses to fall in love with Edward, which seems likely to be the next act of the domestic drama, they may take their own way. I have nothing whatever, henceforth, to do with hearts and love matters. I don't know whether I have any heart at all of my own; and as to other people's, I wish to continue in perfect ignorance of them and their affairs. I hate the very name of love, and I thank God that I am an old bachelor, and that you are——an old maid.

Adieu till next week, when I shall see you.

XXX.

Eleanor to Ethel.

Longbrooke, Feb. 8th.

Sir Charles seems to imply in his last letter (very flattering to you, my dear!), that our lives must be extremely dull and wearisome, deprived of your enchanting society. I beg you will tell him that we contrive to console ourselves tolerably well for this immeasurable loss. Perhaps he would be quite surprised and startled to hear our merriment at times; to hear your mother actually laughing and chatting, not smiling and talking (which we used to think wonderfully gay for her), and Edward in wild spirits, encouraging all sorts of amusement, tiring out all his hunters, wearying the keeper and men with his long sporting rambles, driving your mother out, on fine days—and, in short, as gay himself, and making us as gay, as possible. He is patron of the ball at W——, next week; and, I assure you, there are more young ladies than myself looking forward to the evening. Everybody is well, and everything bright and pleasant; but I must tell you, by way of consoling you, that I do believe *the schoolmistress* misses you.

Well, my fair Lady Herbert, do you think Eleanor as mad as ever? I would not change my freedom, and my happy carelessness, for all your sober happiness, your duties, and your dignities! I would rather have one of our rattling gallops after the hounds, "thorough brake and thorough briar," than any of your poetic wanderings in the vale of the Arno, and by Lake Thrasimene. I like to live and amuse myself, better than to sit still and dream. And we have quite forgotten to be sentimental in these days—even Edward. To give you an instance; we were coming home, the other day, from a walk through the dingle, and passed the skeleton of an old arbour, with some dead boughs of trees hanging about it. Dear me, said your mother, here are the remains of Ethel's birthday bower! Edward was quite angry, and "wondered they couldn't clear the rubbish away!" and he knocked down some of the old poles, and threw down the branches, and then seemed better pleased, when, as you know, he used to be such a hoarder of old

things and relics, and *memories*, and so forth. I thought he was quite cruel, and I told him so, and said I should tell you; upon which he remarked, with a very odd laugh, "as to that, it was a place you hated, and you would be very glad never to see the old arbour again;" so I hope you are pleased! Nevertheless, when we meet, you must tell me whether there is any story, or adventure, or anything, hanging about it; for I half fancy there is, and that Edward knows it. Certainly *he* has no love for the spot. Did I say he had forgotten to be sentimental? by the by, I 'm not quite sure of it, either, for I see he always uses your prayer-book in church, and there are two violets in the leaves; and, moreover, he goes and cries with the old schoolmistress twice a-week.

We never ride through Buckstead now. Edward says it is dangerous, because the deer startle the horses; but I am sure I don't care if they do; you know he was always rather obstinate, so he gets his own way. Your mother drives over, sometimes, and brings back exquisite flowers. Addio, *Padronissima!*

XXXI.

Edward to Mr. Hamilton.

London, April 13th.

Dear Mr. Hamilton,—I am very glad to hear you arrived at Longbrooke so soon after my departure, as my aunt would not have time to feel lonely since we left; and I hope you will kindly stay with her until my return, and then remain awhile, to give me the pleasure of your society. It is a long time since I have written to you; never since last November. I have often wished to do so, if it were only to show you that I am not what I was then, a blind angry fool—when you were all goodness and forbearance. I have often longed to ask your forgiveness; to tell you that when I looked calmly on the past, I saw things as they really were. I saw you, our best friend, with silent kindness, doing all you could for each. I saw that she—oh, that I should live to write it!—had never loved me, or she never could have left me. Yet there *was* a trouble in her eye, that showed me when we parted all was not forgotten. I saw that life had been to me a dream, a picture; that it had vanished, and left me to grapple, as best I might, with its realities, its pains, its disappointments, its every-day labour of living. This is the first time I have written thus; the first time, for months, that I have permitted myself to pause and look back. It does not pain me now. There is a hard impenetrable crust about my heart and soul, and all within me that can feel or think. I have done loving—I have done hoping; and sometimes (God forgive me!), I care not for the future—either for heaven or earth. I don't blame her. I did wrong to be angry. I am convinced, now, that I was quite mistaken about her feelings; and, believing this, I am content—content to forget. I am always actively occupied—perhaps not always usefully; but I must be busy, I dare not be idle. Books do not hold me fast enough to the present—and I never read. I am never still; and this is easy enough here, in the distracting life of London. It is just what I wanted. Mr. Osborne and Eleanor pressed me to join them here; and I came, and find it agreeable enough. She is naturally as fond of excitement, as I am *un*naturally forced to be; so we are continually on the wing. Her piquant beauty and liveliness amuse me; and as I have known her from a child (*our* playmate once!), we are quite at home together; and I may probably remain here while they do. Meantime, I shall hope to hear from you, how you get on at Longbrooke; how my aunt is, etc. But don't write to her as I have written to you—of the past. It can do neither of us any good.

XXXII.

From the same.

London, June.

Great news for you. I am going to be married. I can imagine your surprise, but I don't think it can be greater than mine. However, it 's all one to me! The other day, Mr. Osborne took me into his library, asked me to sit down, looked serious, and sat down opposite to me! I never dreamt of what was coming. He began—"he should offer no apology for what he was going to say. He was sure my high sense of honour, my rectitude of mind, would see at once the justice of the appeal he was going to make." He stopped, but I begged him to go on. "His daughter—it gave him the greatest pain to see her placed in so delicate a position—my marked attentions to her of late—our being constantly seen together; in short, it was supposed, and said, that we were engaged; he had long suspected that her affections were *mine!* that her anxiety and excitement

were injuring her health; that he had resolved, for her sake, to be thus candid, and begged me at once either to leave them, or if by reciprocal affection I could secure her happiness, to trifle with it no longer." I really cannot tell you what I said, I was so astounded. I only know that, at the moment, the idea of self-sacrifice, of throwing away altogether such a worthless wretched thing as my own happiness, was a positive relief to me. I felt that I cared for myself no more than I do for the paper I am writing upon; I assured him hurriedly that, "much as I was surprised (so far I was honest!), I fully sympathised with his feelings and wishes; that, with his permission I would at once seek Eleanor, and learn from her a confirmation of his supposition; that nothing on my part should ever be wanting to contribute to her happiness." The old gentleman looked at me very earnestly; I could not help being touched with his expression. "Love her, my dear boy," he said; "protect her and cherish her, as I have done. She is a wayward child; but she is my only one, and very dear."

So I went straight to Eleanor. I never stopped to think or look back; and it is all fixed. I shall do my best to make her happy—as I told you I am not what I was, and this will convince you of it. One pang, one momentary pain, like a sharp shot, went straight through me; one thought of *her*—but it steeled me only more sternly for the future. It is all over—all right. I am as happy as I ever can be, or wish to be. Write to Eleanor, and wish her joy—joy!

XXXIII.

Mr. Hamilton to Edward.

My Dear Boy,—Your letters have lately given me pain; especially the last, on a subject which ought to call forth congratulation, but which is far from exciting such feelings in me.

Pardon me, and bear with me a few moments; I am not going to lecture you, or blame you. I only wish to point out to you, clearly, if I can, that you have struck into a wrong path, which, instead of leading you to calmness and peace, must end in fresh trouble and disappointment, and regret. When a great sorrow falls to the lot of a human being, it does not fall by chance or indiscriminately, as rain falls upon the earth, or as storms that sweep everything in their way. The stroke is directed by one who applies it with care and knowledge to the spirit he deals with, and commands that it should do a great work there. Now this work must be one of eventual good, not evil; if evil, it is we who make it so, for the purposes of God are all good. Ask yourself in what spirit have you received your trial. Has it hardened your soul, and fed it with pride, or humbled you to submission, and strengthened you in goodness by patient acceptance of his will? I leave you to answer this to yourself. I grieve to pain you, if I do so—for I am deeply conscious of what you have undergone—and know how much harder it is, at first, to let affliction have its perfect work, than to stifle it, and hurry through life trying to forget it. But you will never forget it in that way. It must be its own antidote, its own exceeding great reward—in its noble results—its purifying and strengthening power, and the elevating and everlasting hopes that spring from the right use of it. Lay this to heart. It is long since I have written thus, and I did not think I could have said so much.

Give my love to Eleanor. I have nothing at all to say about that, for I have vowed to myself, henceforth, to keep clear of all love affairs. I will only say, that I wish to God it was such on your part, and that the only means by which you can repair the injustice (pardon me) which you are doing to her affection, must be your never-ceasing efforts to make her happy; and I trust, in time, you will love her as a wife ought to be loved.

Your aunt is pretty well, and much rejoiced in the prospect of having Eleanor here, which, I am sure, it will give you pleasure to know. When may we expect you at Longbrooke?

XXXIV.

Edward to Mr. Hamilton.

I have been much distressed, indeed annoyed, by your letter. It is too late, my dear Sir, to talk to me in this manner. I entreat you to do so no more. I have taken my own course, and I must go on. By Heaven! you would have me dwell upon the past, conjure up her very image, dream of it, weep before it—behold it for ever between me and the light, between me and peace—such peace as I can purchase only by a continual flying from remembrance.

Do not force me to speak of this again. I wrote to you expecting sympathy, not reproaches, and I cannot bear them.

XXXV.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Longbrooke.

Mrs. Beauchamp, as you know, would hear of no excuse. Come here, I must, to welcome, with her, the arrival of her nephew and niece. This place seems to me so changed now, the life and soul of it gone, that it is a sense of duty alone that brings me to stay here; but for the sake of my poor friend who is gone, and for dear Ethel, I would do much. We have good accounts of their progress. They are to spend the ensuing winter in Rome, which, I think, will suit Ethel much better than their last abode at Genoa.

Sir Charles is looking forward, with anxiety, to her confinement, which is to take place at Florence. They hope, after another winter spent abroad, to return to Buckstead. Ethel, however, very seldom mentions this; and seems to repress the yearning which I am sure she must feel to be once more in her dear old haunts. She writes to me cheerfully, never alluding to the past, and often presses me to come and join them; but not even her invitation can lure me from old England. I know better. Well! to-morrow, we expect Edward and his wife! I shall delay posting this till I can announce their arrival. The weather, fortunately, is very fine.

Thursday.—Yesterday, an hour before dinner-time, as I was standing in the flower-garden, among dear Ethel's plants, I heard the wheels of the carriage, and hurried to the house in time to hand Mrs. Edward Beauchamp to the library, where the old lady was waiting to receive her. Edward jumped out of the carriage, apparently in high spirits, shook me by the hand, talked very fast, and scolded the postilions for being so long on the road, though the panting sweating horses told the rate they had travelled. Eleanor was quieter than usual, and paler, but looking very handsome. I saw her glance anxiously at him several times in the course of the evening. His manner to her was particularly attentive and polite—but there is about him now a slight irritability, hurry, almost petulance, unlike his real character, which makes me feel, painfully, that he is forcing himself to act a part—his motives, I doubt not, are good, but how mistaken, alas! he has yet to learn. Now that they are come home, he will, I hope, occupy himself usefully and happily. Many duties devolve upon him in the position he holds, and I think they will instruct him. It is wonderful how soon what is, at first, regarded merely as a duty, becomes an interest; how soon a quiet sober happiness is thus gained, which, in time, takes the place of the pleasurable joy, the bliss, for which a heart may once have yearned, and from which it is debarred. I hope yet, and at no distant time, to see Edward Beauchamp a happy and a useful man,—but the intense energy of feeling, which had thrown all its power upon one affection, one hope, and then found itself suddenly repulsed, crushed, totally valueless, producing misery instead of happiness, this turns inward upon the soul, and cannot be conquered; it lies struggling, held down, at times, by a strong will, but still living and impelling. What I hope to see is this energy usefully directed—centred on some worthy object, not curbed, but allowed its free and vigorous action. Until then its possessor cannot be happy. Life, at best, is a labour, but it may be a labour of love.

Mrs. Beauchamp seems to get on very well with the young people; and I shall soon leave them to themselves, not to return here, I hope, until dear Ethel can meet me. You and I will not part again, my dear sister, for some time to come. Adieu, till we meet.

XXXVI.

The Same.

I have just received the enclosed letter from Sir Charles Herbert, and I confess it makes me think seriously of breaking my resolution never to depart from old England; I long to see Ethel—it is now three years since the dear child left us. I should not be away long—this is September; if I leave now, I should return to you in April. But you shall hear from me again when my plans are more matured. Please to return the letter when you have read it.

P.S.—I don't think I shall travel with the Beauchamps. Edward is so nervous and hasty, and she is grown so dull—we shan't suit each other at all.

Sir Charles Herbert to Mr. Hamilton.

Rome, September 4th.

Dear Mr. Hamilton,—We are settled here again in our old quarters, for the winter. Ethel seems to prefer it to any other place since we left home, and on account of our

dear little girl we are glad to be stationary. I wish you could see them both at this moment —the windows of our sitting-room wide open, for the afternoon is delicious—(you know our house is on the rise of the Pincian Hill, so we look out over Rome),—my wife is copying a sketch she made in the Campagna, the other day—and the child has stolen one of the brushes, with some bright colour in it, and is making pictures most delightfully on her clean white frock, glancing up with sly laughing eyes at her mother. Now she is discovered, and laughs outright! I have never been quite at ease about Ethel's health since we were married, but I think she is now better and stronger. Her delight in this wonderful place, with its various interests, is never-ending; and she is laying up a store of recollections, both mental and visible. We have given orders for copies of some of the best pictures here, and Ethel employs a good deal of time in sketching, so that her portfolio will be a most interesting one, not to ourselves alone. From this you will conclude that she is happy, and actively occupied, and in very tolerable health. But there has always been a langour about her, a necessity for effort, a something to shake off, a want of that thorough power of enjoyment (an evidence always of health of body and mind), which has been a continual anxiety to me. I think she is conscious of it herself, for sometimes, when she has caught my eye fixed upon her thoughtfully, she has made an evident and successful exertion, and resumed that sweet air of animated gaiety which was so beautiful and charming in her as a child—but the peculiar sparkle of eye and lip is not there. You remember that exquisite expression, the upturned arch look, when a sudden thought or quick emotion of joy darted like a sunbeam from her eyes, and seemed to spread over her a halo of light—I never see it now!—Yet she is cheerful, unaffectedly cheerful, and I know she loves me—the shyness (so lovely in her) of our earlier intercourse has worn away; she was always confiding and affectionate, and now I meet her sweet eyes, and they do not shrink from mine, and there is a tender truth in their gentle language. Day after day do I bless God for the treasure he has given me—and hold it trembling, with fervent prayers that I may still be thus blest, unworthy as I am.

You will know, by this time, that Edward Beauchamp and his wife are coming here this winter. I rejoice to hear it, because it will be a pleasure to Ethel to meet her dear old friends, and it will be a comfort to her to ask and hear all she can about her poor mother's sudden illness and death, which was such a shock to her a few months ago. We have now to speak, once more, on the subject she has often mentioned to you, a wish she has long pleaded—that you will join us here, stay with us for the winter, and we can all return together to England in spring. You know what a delight it would be to Ethel; for her sake I beg you to comply with our request. I can promise you, under our roof, so much of English comfort, that you shall not grumble with us for luring you here. You shall be all day long with Ethel, till you are tired of her company!—and, in a very few months, find yourself again by your fireside at Buckstead, or Longbrooke. Here is Ethel beside me, and she says I must have done, that she may have this little corner to herself. (From Ethel) Padre mio! Come and let me embrace you once more!—my little child puts her hands upon my paper—now upon my pen, and she shall sign this too—I will guide her little fingers, and she shall write—

LILIAN.

XXXVII.

Mr. Hamilton to Ethel.

God bless you all! What rogues you are—Baby Lilian must have a hand in it too! I'll pinch her little nose for it when I come, for I *am* coming, I believe, — no, I don't believe it, for I can't — but I tell everybody I'm going to Rome, and everybody says I am going, and wishes me a pleasant journey, and hopes I shall soon be back—(that's all very well)—so I suppose I am going—but how I've made my mind up to it is, and ever will be, a mystery to myself. Do you believe you shall really see me? I hope you won't be disappointed; but if I am robbed and murdered on the way, it will be all on your heads. I am, for the first bold step, to put myself under the care of a strange man with a very black beard, called a courier—but he looks most like a bandit; I am to commit, with a wilful self-sacrifice, purse and person into his hands, and be "conducted" by him from this door in England to yours in Rome. He is to tell me what I am to look at, what I am to eat, where I am to sleep, and how long I am to sleep—he is to use as much of my money as he likes, and when it is done he is to ask me for more. I am to believe everything he says, and to consider him a very honest ex-

cellent person, and my most conscientious adviser. From the moment I take this step, I am a hero, or a martyr—and all the rest will follow, of course. I shall be put down at your door some day, if the fates are propitious, like an obedient portmanteau, that has kept quiet on the road, and been "conducted" to its destination, or, perhaps, you will receive me packed up like a large parcel, with "*favoured by the courier*," written outside.

XXXVIII.

Edward to Mr. Hamilton.

*** We leave here on the 28th of this month. Do just as you like about taking a seat in our carriage. We would much rather you did so. Eleanor is looking ill and out of spirits. As to myself, I am well enough, but heartily tired of this country, and content to do anything for a change. I am very glad, very thankful. to hear you will be in Rome when we are. I cannot think of it quite calmly yet—and never with pleasure—but I have a restless longing desire to see them again, to hear *her* voice once more. I shall be better then. Don't mistake me—I believe, I trust in God, I love her no longer as I did—but I must see her again, whatever it cost me. I could be more content if I saw Eleanor happy, but she is not. It won't do, Mr. Hamilton—all won't do. I am a miserable man—there is a blight upon me. I have struggled, I have striven after better, calmer feelings; for the sake of others have I striven, as well as for my own, but it won't do—there is a curse upon me, and it will go with me to my grave. I know what you are saying—that I ought not to write in this way, and doubtless you are right—for it is unmanly, it is wrong; but you have been kind to me, and you know all. I beseech you do not fear me, do not think that, when we all meet again, I shall give way,—think better of me, ill as I deserve that you should.

* * * * * *

XXXIX.

Ethel to Mr. Hamilton.

Great joy to-day, as we walked from the post-office, reading your letter. Thanks, a thousand thanks. Yes, I do believe you are really coming, for you are not one to disappoint us, in spite of your jokes, and your black-bearded courier. I shall send this letter to meet you at Geneva as you desire. You bade me, when we parted, to write to you as I had always done, and give you my thoughts, and be candid with you as I had ever been. I know that I have only half obeyed you, but at the same time I feel that you quite understand why I have not done so fully. I have purposely avoided alluding in any way to our past trials, or giving you any idea of my present feelings regarding them, because I thought it wisest, on every account, to let my new life assume its full reality, and to give no fresh form to any thoughts connected with that, which, though it can never be forgotten, must exist only as a thing apart from life and its duties, as a warning, or as other sorrows are remembered, to chasten and strengthen us. You will find me happy—happier far than I ever dared to hope I should be—happy in heart, in mind, in soul—for we have a perfect sympathy in those high pure hopes, those holy aspirations, the faith and the consolations which the soul seeks after. And intellectually he is one who draws me continually upward—to the true sources of knowledge—to the means of attaining it, pointing out clearly its great ends and uses, and so convincing me of its worth. Here, in this interesting and wonderful place, with our time very much to ourselves, the varied resources of his mind are peculiarly open to me—Art is with him not merely a taste, or a vague admiration, but a deep loving study, a continual delight, never separated from nature, but growing out of it, and illustrating it.

The other day when he had been reading to me from Dante, and I had been expressing myself envious of the poet's power of clothing such thoughts in such words, he took from among his letters one he had just received, and showed me a passage which expresses exactly, yet so much better than I could, what I have often thought, that I must give it you. "We cannot all be poets—but in one noble sense we may every one of us bind an unfading chaplet on our brows. Life itself may be set to music, and so be changed into a poem. A beautiful life is perhaps the truest poem of all. It may be a series of smiling Idylls, or a volume of sparkling Odes, or a rich many-coloured Comedy, or a solemn Epic, or an august Tragedy, or, once more, a string of sweet songs, love songs and hymns. It depends on the man himself, and the sphere God chooses to appoint him."

Then my husband's life is indeed a poem, and I thank Heaven that it is given to me to read it aright.

You may think from all this that my hap-

piness is grave, and soberer in its colouring than that of the young in general. Perhaps it is, but it is not less peaceful, less blessed. It is repose after struggle, ease after pain, victory after long strife. I may have lost, in the meantime, the early freshness which some retain through life, and which gives zest and almost rapture to real enjoyment—this is gone from me for ever; but to have lost only this, to feel that my heart is still warm, my affections capable as ever of expansion and indulgence, capable too of making the happiness of others—this excites within me a gratitude so deep, so fervent, that I can express it only to God in prayer! I have now but one sorrowful thought to intrude upon this peace, and it is rather from what I fear than from what I know. It is that he whom I once so fondly loved, whom I still love as in the days of childhood, that he is not happy! It is from Eleanor's letters I gather it, from what I hear of his occupations, his habits of life, so different to what they used to be—and from those who have seen Eleanor since her marriage I learn that she is changed too, and looks always pale and anxious. This is not like her, and sometimes I am very uneasy. I rejoice, more than I can express, that you will be with us when they arrive, and I am sure you will do all you can for Edward, if my fears prove true; he can learn much from you that no one else could teach him. For my sake watch over him and guide him. The letter he wrote to me after my mother's death was very touching and very considerate—but it gave me the impression of unhappiness, not from anything he said particularly, but the whole tone of it. I am more easy now that I have written to you openly, as in old times—I have given you my thoughts—and it is a long letter, so I must conclude now, with the joyful hope of our meeting very soon.

XL.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Milan, October.

Safely arrived here, much to my own surprise. Found excellent roads, very tolerable inns, and had good weather all the way, and a letter from Ethel waiting me at Geneva. Met the Beauchamps there. She was a good deal tired, and they staid a week to recruit. I believe the hotel they were at was a much better one than mine, and I wanted to go there for the two nights I staid, but my Signore would not hear of it. These fellows have the quietest way of making you do as they like! I wished to go by the steam-boat to Vevay, to see something of the lake, which is really very fine; and was asked by a gentleman with whom I had made a sort of acquaintance to join him on board next morning. "Sir," says Signore, who as usual was not far off, "*we* do not go by the steam-boat at all." I was turning round with, "Pray who asked you, Sir?"—and feeling extremely independent and insulted, but he looked so wise and quiet and decided, that I ended by only staring at him—and telling my acquaintance that in general I avoided steam-boats, and preferred travelling by land. I am ashamed to confess that I know very little of where I've been, and where I have yet to go. When I am once fairly arrived, once more with Ethel, I shall dispense with Signore's services, and look about a little for myself. At present I really think it is the safest plan to do just as he likes, to ask no questions, and get on in his way.

I've not seen anything yet to make me think less of old England. Thank God my absence is not to be a long one. In Paris I fancied the men wanted the bold fresh look of our good John Bulls. They don't look you in the face as our brave lads do—and their trousers like sacks, and hair like wild Indians, and their Monsieur, Monsieur, at every turn—how I do hate it. I have seen some fine-looking fellows among the Italians. The other day I was walking in the street here, and was accosted by a poor woman in English, or rather in Irish. "God bless yer honour," she said, "I'll wager ye're from ould England!" "How should you know that?" said I; "but you're right enough, good woman." "Och, it's jist yer fresh look, and the stare in yer eyes. It's easy guessing on a stranger in these parts." "Well," said I, not displeased with the chat, "and it 's easy guessing that you're from the land of clover." "Clover is it! 't was a bare land to me when I left it! but I pray the saints I'll see the green leaves that's left in it before I die!" The tears were in the poor soul's eyes; and then she told me how she had left her country with a soldier husband, who had died on the passage from India, and she, sick and sorrowful, had left the ship at Malta with one or two others, and was begging her way home. While I was listening to her, I spied my Signore's confounded black face coming up. I knew he would say something about impostors, and hinder me. So I fumbled in my pocket and got out a handful of those dirty coins before he saw me. Among them was

glittering a good English sovereign, it smiled like an English face at me.—"Here, here," said I, "this will help you when you get home." "Impostors, Monsieur," cried he behind me; "Monsieur ought not to listen to the beggars." "Hang your Monseer-ing," said I, in a passion, "let me alone." He looked very much astonished and rather savage, but the good woman's blessing was quite enough to avert an evil eye.

Signore and I have been very polite to each other since. My next letter will be from Rome.

XLI.

The Same.

Rome, October 30th.

I know it will make you easy and happy to hear of my safe arrival here, my dear Sister. I am myself delighted at this satisfactory ending of my long journey, finding such a welcome as would have rewarded one for much more toil and trouble, and seeing my beloved girl well and happy. The latter part of my travels was very comfortable, if not pleasant. At Florence I was really much gratified. Saw a great deal that was interesting, and met with a very kind family, as English as myself. So we went to many places together, and I got out of the clutches of my Signore pretty often. From Florence here I was certainly considerably indebted to his services, for he, being a capital cook, procured me some viands that were eatable, in which respect I was luckier than my fellow travellers, who declared that a raw pigeon was the only thing they could get at that desolate shelter on the top of a weary hill, a most uninviting place called Radicofani.

But you will be anxious to hear all about our friends, so I will reserve my travels till we meet. I have told you Ethel is looking well; she is just as I expected to see her, a little thinner, not quite so gay, but sweet and cheerful and affectionate as ever. Sir Charles too looks well and happy—their child the loveliest little creature you can imagine—like Ethel, but with fairer hair, and lighter eyes; they call it "Lily." At first she would not come to me, but when the mother was sitting close beside me, and the father standing near, the child soon nestled up too, and sat upon my knee, looking wondering into my face—a sweet darling indeed, and the greatest amusement to us all. I don't know how I am to help spoiling her.

The first morning after my arrival, they took me a drive. We went through the Roman Forum, and out by one of the old Gates into the wide open flat country. I was very much struck. It is very unlike what I expected. The remains of ancient grandeur are touching to behold, and very wonderful. Ethel did not talk much, nor tell me what to look at, and what to admire. They left me to myself, and I could not help feeling and thinking much as we drove along. I am glad I came. The Coliseum is something indescribably grand — and so far perfect, that you may bring up before your mind's eye the thronging multitudes of the past days, within its great circle, and trace the manners and arrangements of the games, and almost realise to sight what one has read and heard of. I must try to brush up my Roman History! The air here is delicious, still warm, but mellow and soft—the evenings delightfully cool and calm. The country looks to my eye rather arid and burnt up, after the green fields of England. The people are uncommonly polite everywhere. You take off your hat to everybody, and everybody takes off his hat to you. I have been several times styled "Your Excellency," and sometimes am "Milord."

Anything is better than Monsieur. I have got rid of my black-bearded courier, and feel myself again. Sir Charles Herbert has got his English servant here, who has travelled with him before, and I was so glad to see the fellow, I gave him a hearty shake of the hand. We have been this morning to the rooms engaged for the Beauchamps. They are not far from here. A few arrangements Ethel has made there has given quite a "comfortable" look to them. She knows what they like and wish. She was having some furniture moved that stood in the way of getting to the windows—"You know," she said to me in a low voice, "dear Edward used to enjoy so much standing at an open window and looking out." The calm, affectionate, unembarrassed tone told me much—told me of peace, of innocent love, of kind thoughtfulness, apart from all pain. God grant his heart may be like hers, and then we shall all be happy, and spend a most cheerful winter; but I dare scarce hope for it. My fears are greater than my hopes. They are to arrive to-morrow; but to-day is post-day, and this must go.

XLII.

The Same.

Rome, Nov. 4th.

I am sure you will be best pleased if you hear all about us, so I shall keep a sort of running account for you, beginning this letter the day after my last was posted, and so going on till next post-day, and giving you all intermediate intelligence.

We awoke to see a beautiful day for the arrival of our friends in the Eternal City. After a little debate at breakfast, at which it was proposed that we should all go to meet them at their rooms and wait their coming, it was decided that Sir Charles and I should go alone, and then fetch Ethel and little Lilian, when the bustle of unpacking, etc., was over. They were to reach Civita Castellana last night, therefore we calculated on their being here early; and at two we went to meet them. Their courier had just arrived, and in less than half an hour they followed. Sir Charles's servant was waiting to show them the way up to their rooms (for you have no idea what queer places these are; you have to enter generally at a large door into a dirty sort of yard, and then through sundry other doors, and up steps innumerable, sometimes, before you get to the habitable portion of a house; however this is not so bad as many). Well, Sir Charles and I were waiting on the steps to receive them. The instant Edward saw us his countenance fell—his eager eye was disappointed—it had expected the sight of Etthel! However, our greetings were cordial and cheerful, though on his part somewhat hurried; he did not ask for Ethel, but Sir Charles told him of our arrangement, and proposed fetching her very soon." "Oh, he said, "I will go with you at once." Eleanor said she was fatigued, and would wait their return; and her maid came in, and took off some of her wrappings, and then I saw such a change in her beautiful, round, full figure! Oh, sister, sister! what a work is going on there! Is this Eleanor? my lips were on the point of uttering aloud. Her hands are so thin, that when she raised them to her head to remove her bonnet, and the full light shone into the room, I could absolutely see through them. Her features are sharpened, and now look most delicately beautiful, like chiselled marble. But she did not complain of illness, and her manner on meeting me had a great deal of its usual liveliness; so no remark was made, and I scrupulously forbore letting her see how struck I was. After a little talking we set out to our house, Edward with us. How did he look? I hear you ask. He looked well—but older and a little thinner; handsomer than ever I saw him. His height, grace, fine head, and look of manly power—all impressed me, though I was conscious that, in spite of this noble appearance, he had not the moral power, the self-control, of our tender Ethel! Nevertheless, I felt like (what I was) a little old man, walking or rather trotting beside him; and even Sir Charles Herbert's dignified and polished exterior lost something of its effect in comparison.

We walked on quickly—our windows face the street; it runs down opposite—so as we advanced we saw Ethel at the window. Edward's quick eyes followed mine; and their look when he saw her!—it was not joy, it was a wild gleaming rapture such as I never saw before, such as I never could have imagined, and they instantly filled with tears. We all seemed, by instinct, to quicken our pace. I saw Edward make a strong effort to command himself; he ran up the stairs, I saw Ethel open the door wide, she stood there in her beauty, with a smile upon her face, and he clasped her in his arms. I left Sir Charles to see the rest, and I ran to my own room, and cried like an old fool. Much good shall I do them, groaned I, when I got over it. I wish to God I was at home again.

By and by I went back to them, and then they were sitting together very comfortably, Edward looking enchantingly happy; Ethel glad too, very glad, she looked; but I saw there had been tears in her eyes, though she was calmer, much, than he was. It is this he wants—calmness, patience; but he will learn it from Time, the great teacher. I was pleased to see them all cheerful, and proposed we should return to Eleanor (this running backwards and forwards, you see, was a fine thing—gave a little bustle and action to the scene). Ethel went to put on her bonnet, and now the child darted into the room, this "two years' darling" of all our hearts. Edward snatched her up, and covered her with kisses; but she screamed and kicked as he held her close to him. "Mama, mama! Paddie, Paddie!" (her name for me.) "No, no, no!" And was put down crying, in a great fright, and looked at him horrified. He seemed a little disappointed, and let her go; and directly after Ethel came in, and we all, including the child, went off to Eleanor. The

two old friends met with great pleasure. I could see Ethel was struck with the change in Eleanor; but they chatted very happily together, and Eleanor seemed much revived. Little Lilian took to her at once, sat on her knee, allowed herself to be kissed and fondled, but would not look at Edward at all—ran away when he came near her, and would not be coaxed to alter her opinion of him. We all dined together at our house, and spent the evening. They looked over Ethel's drawings, and Edward was full of plans for excursions and sight-seeings. Sir Charles seconded him very kindly in all his proposals, and we had a very harmonious evening. But Eleanor's gaiety subsided again; she sat quietly, often in deep thought—so unlike her—and, till the child was put to bed, she held it continually on her knee, lavishing all sorts of endearments and caresses upon it. When they were gone, Ethel expressed to me her fears about Eleanor's health, in which Sir Charles and I fully sympathised. We must watch her carefully. Edward does not seem at all aware of any change in her.

Now, good night, for it is very late, and I have made a long story of to-day for you.

Nov. 7th.—Nothing particular or eventful to record. I ventured to-day, at Ethel's suggestion, to hint to Edward how ill we think Eleanor looking. He did not seem surprised or alarmed, but remarked, that he hoped the change, and this air, would do her good. He was in high spirits; added, that he was very glad they had come. "It has done me good, Mr. Hamilton," he said, pressing my hand at parting; "I am happier already." I hope he is really so, and that his happiness is from the right source; I should trust it more were he less excited. He is constantly with us, even when Eleanor is not able to come; but I think, on the whole, she looks better than she did. I had hoped, from their meeting, that she and Ethel were as attached friends as ever—and I still think it is so on Ethel's part; but there is a want of something, I can hardly tell what, in Eleanor's manner to her—perhaps it is a want of confidingness—that makes me uneasy.

This morning we were sitting together, Ethel and I, Edward and Eleanor; and Ethel was drawing, Edward standing near, bending over and watching her. She was quiet and thoughtful—did not seem disposed to talk, but he would talk, and, I thought, seemed to tease her rather, by continual attempts to make her converse. At last, I heard him say, in a low earnest tone, "How cold you are!" "Yes, indeed," she answered, wilfully misunderstanding him; "I am cold—the air is chilly to-day;" and she got up, and went to the wood fire, which, for the first time, was blazing on the hearth. (By the by, these fires of wood are not so comfortless as I expected, though I do look forward to a glorious poke at your red-hot coals, when I'm blessed with a sight of them again.) I saw Eleanor's eyes fixed upon Edward, then slowly move on to Ethel; a speechless question was there—in those large, full, once-merry and sparkling eyes! "I must go home, now," she said; "Will you come, Edward?" "Oh, wait a little," he replied—"half an hour longer. I want to see this drawing finished." "But I don't expect to finish it to-day," rejoined Ethel. "We had better walk out. I shall enjoy it more. We will take Eleanor home." "Yes, yes," said I, "let us walk; perhaps we shall meet Sir Charles;" which we did; and, leaving them at their rooms, he and I and Ethel had a long delightful stroll to the Lateran Church, a real good walk, which I quite enjoyed. But I can see Ethel is not at ease. We are not all as happy as we were at first. Edward's excited passionate way, Eleanor's loss of spirits, make her anxious; and she *must* see how it is; it is impossible for her to be blind to the truth, that his unconquered and still devoted love for her is at the bottom of it all! I can see it with my old eyes! God forgive us; we have made a bad business of it altogether. My consolation—and a very great one—is, that Sir Charles's perfect affection for, and confidence in, his wife, not only saves him any unhappiness, but really prevents his seeing the state of things; and her calmness and discretion, and self-command, I can always trust.

We have all sorts of romantic plans for excursions, etc., on hand. Edward never rests. We are to go for two days to Tivoli, and to Albano. I should be glad, for my own part, to stay at home, for I am wonderfully comfortable, considering where I am, but Ethel seems to wish me always to accompany them. Our next affair is to go and see the Coliseum by moonlight, in a few days, when Luna will be pleased to favour us. And there's the Statuary by torchlight, in the Vatican, to see, and Heaven knows what of wonderful spectacles. Everybody goes one way here, this to see, and that to see; and you meet a whole

regiment of English people wherever you turn.

I fear there is very little, so far, in this letter to interest you; but it will give you some idea of how we are going on; and I will resume it again in a few days. Before saying Good night! though, I must make a little confession to you. I've been cheated! I was sauntering through the streets, by myself, and turned into a shop (something, on a larger scale, like those old curiosity shops where you like to go and pry about), and I bought a few things, marbles, and so forth, which I thought would look nice in your house. I was very well satisfied with my bargain, and expected my taste would be highly approved when they were brought home. Alas! I shall never forget how Sir Charles laughed—how Ethel could not help joining, and how, at last, I was obliged to laugh myself. They were actually not worth a third of what I paid, and certainly not the carriage to England. However, I'm determined I'll have the fellow up, and get my money back. Sir Charles says it's no use now, and that I have bought experience very cheap; but I've no notion of being done in this way, and I shall not submit to it. I am getting cross, so good night!

Nov. 12th.—I have not been well for the last day or two, nor inclined to write; so, as I have already pretty well filled this sheet, it shall be posted, for I have nothing to add, but that we are going on as usual.

XLIII.

The Same.

December 3rd.

You would hear by Ethel's letter how ill I became after my last went to you. It was a sort of fever, I suppose, brought on by a cold I had neglected. I was in bed for near a fortnight; but, thanks to her kind nursing, and my strength of constitution, I have weathered it pretty well, and feel much recovered. Tomorrow, or next day, we are going to Tivoli for a few days. They wanted Edward and Eleanor to go without us, and not wait; but he would not. He has been very kind during my illness, but seldom sat long with me alone. Indeed he seemed to shun that. I endeavoured one day to draw him into conversation about himself, but I have not attempted it since. He quite silenced me by what he said—I may say, shocked me; so that I have said little since, but thought much. It was merely this —these few words—yet what volumes do they speak! "I wish," said I, "you and Eleanor would have gone into the country as you intended, during that fine weather. It would have done her good. We could have gone another time." "It would have been no pleasure to me," he answered, gloomily. "Don't do yourself injustice, Edward," I rejoined; "I think better of you." "Mr. Hamilton," he said, in a voice that trembled with earnestness and agitation, "I have been tried enough. Here, here," and he beat his breast, "here has been misery for the last three years! Now, whatever it cost me, I will snatch all the little happiness I can. I am happy now. Don't hinder me. I know not whither I am going; I don't care." He went away. "Lord, have mercy upon us!" was my devout inward answer. Our troubles are but beginning. I don't see where it's all to end.

Dec. 7th.—We have been our excursion, and spent two days at Tivoli. We all went; Lily and nurse, too. The child was so happy, —ran about gathering green leaves, and many little flowers blooming under them. It was very pleasant. She has at last made great friends with Edward. He was carrying her down a steep walk, where we were all winding our way, from the Temple of the Sybil. He walked beside Ethel, who had her husband's arm. I was by Eleanor; accidentally her foot slipped, and she would have fallen, but for my assistance. As it was, she slightly sprained her ankle. I called to them to stop, but they did not hear. Edward was completely engrossed with Ethel. "Never mind," said Eleanor; but her eyes filled with tears, and again I noticed, with deep pain, the thin white hand, as she leaned upon my arm to rest. She turned away her head, but could not conceal her tears, which fell upon her shawl. She must have seen that I noticed it, but made no remark, nor apology, nor excuse; and her silence was more distressing to me than any words. How little I ever expected to feel so painful an interest in this once gay and careless girl! By and by we went on, and joined the others. Yesterday we returned; and this evening we are to see the Coliseum by moonlight.

Eleanor still feels the pain of her ankle. Edward was distressed when he heard about it, and seemed anxious to be kind, as if a sudden remorse had struck him. But her manner to him was cold and repulsive, as it

often is now; and this little circumstance, which I hoped might bring forth good, in producing kindness and sympathy, is passing away,—one among the many that convince me that this unhappiness is too deeply rooted to be easily healed.

Dec. 4th.—Ay! we went last night our moonlight excursion,—a pretty excursion it was,—and I am hardly composed enough yet to write to you about it, and feel quite tired, for I could not sleep last night, and am anxious and unhappy. We went out on horseback in the morning, Sir Charles, Ethel, and I, and all came home cheerful and pleased with our ride. The Beauchamps dined with us, and we went to the Coliseum between nine and ten o'clock, a most lovely night, the sky clear, and the sharp shadows of the buildings thrown out in the bright moonlight—such a night as ought to have turned us all from evil! Unfortunately, Sir Charles had a bad cold, and, profiting by my experience, staid in the house. We all wished to defer going on this account, but he would not hear of it, the night being so fine. Perhaps if he had gone, this would not have happened; but there's a Providence in everything, and we must believe it best. Nobody was there but ourselves, Ethel would have no Cicerone or anybody. We had been there often in daylight, and knew best how to enjoy it. I can give you no idea of the wonderful grandeur of the effect, and I shall not attempt to describe it. I don't think any description could convey the feeling of the reality, and if it could, it has been done, and will be done, by abler pens than mine. After standing silently for some time, in the midst of the vast space, enclosed by the ruined walls, we ascended some of the flights of steps, which are exceedingly steep, and passed on along the passages or corridors, and, wandering about, got separated, and I found myself alone with Eleanor. We went on, still silently, till Eleanor startled me by her sudden question, "Where can the others be?" "Not far," said I, looking round, but I could not see them. I called—no answer. Again we paused; "Listen—hush," said Eleanor, "I heard footsteps, don't speak, don't move," she uttered rapidly, and so earnestly, that involuntarily I obeyed her. The footsteps were in the passage behind us, from which we were screened, and then we heard voices,—Edward's low, but eager, impassioned, entreating—"Let us call to them," I said, "they are here." She put her hand upon my mouth, she grasped my arm tight, "Hush, don't speak." Petrified to the spot, I stood a few moments, long enough to hear these words; "Ethel, beloved Ethel! do not drive me from you. My only happiness is to see you, hear you—yes, I love you, Ethel, love you as I ever did, it is the breath of life to me." "I knew how it was," said Eleanor, in a low hoarse whisper. "Now, come away." I would have said, Wait; if you have heard him, hear Ethel. But they had passed on, and Eleanor drew me away. She still grasped my arm tight, and I could feel her trembling so, that she could scarcely support herself. "Wait here a moment," I said, as calmly as I could; "let me speak to you. It is no use trying to gloss over or misunderstand what we have heard; but I entreat you by all that is sacred, to remember, to believe, that Ethel is pure and faithful in her inmost heart. It is with him a delusion, a madness, from which he must awake." "Never mind, never mind," she answered, carelessly and proudly. "I am not surprised, I knew how it was. Say no more about it. I shall say nothing—be equally silent—say no more." How my heart bled for her no words could tell, but I had no further comfort to offer her, I could but obey her and be silent. We soon met the others again, with what feelings on our part you may imagine. Ethel was walking hastily in advance of Edward, and, taking my arm, immediately proposed our return, and we went home. She was silent almost all the way, but Eleanor, to my astonishment, was very animated, talked incessantly, and I was miserable to perceive the effort she was making. Ethel offered to take them home, fearing she would be tired, but Eleanor would not hear of it, came on to us, and her spirits scarcely flagged during the hour she staid with us. I was inwardly torn with doubts and indecision as to how to act, whether to confide in Ethel about what had passed, or to be silent, as Eleanor in the pride of her sorrow and pain had desired. I decided on the latter course. After I had retired for the night, Ethel tapped at my door, and came in. There was an expression of deep grief on her face. "Come in, come in, my dear," said I. "May I sit with you a little while?" she said, in a trembling voice. I drew a chair close to mine. She put her arms round my neck, burst into tears, and lay sobbing on my breast, as in days gone by—such days

as I hoped never to see again. "Now, now, my dearest child," I began; but I was myself greatly troubled, and knew not what to say. "Forgive me," she sobbed, "if I distress you. It is very wrong of me to give way thus. I thought I had conquered such weakness. My tears are not for myself. I thank my God, devoutly thank him, I have conquered all that! But it is for Edward; oh, Mr. Hamilton! he is wretched—wretched; has given himself over to evil, seems to have lost all thought, all goodness, all self-command. I have been deeply, deeply pained, to-night—and his poor wife! What is to be done? Oh, have I brought all this upon those I loved? God forgive me!" Here she wept again, more bitterly than ever. "He, who was once so good, so true-hearted, so honest, so kind!" I soothed her as tenderly as I could, and after a little time we began to talk seriously and quietly. I promised to speak to him openly, and endeavour to awaken him, if possible, to a sense of duty. "Speak to him strongly," she urged; "he was always open to conviction, to affectionate counsel." "I see nothing for it, at present," I suggested, "but to separate; do you go on to Naples, and leave them. I shall tell Edward it must be so. Sir Charles will do whatever you wish." "I would tell him all," she said, "but that I wish to spare him pain, and to preserve, if possible, his respect for Edward." I agreed with her in this, and we parted for the night. She will not mention the going to Naples, till I have had some conversation with Edward, for which I shall seek the first opportunity. I have a thousand times wished myself at home again—but for Ethel's sake. I might have known what I was coming to, after that letter of Edward's, but that I believed he had more sense and self-command. He is more changed both in mind and manner than I could have conceived possible. Yet, there is something fascinating and noble about him, I know not what. I love him, but deeply pity him.

6th.—We had planned a rendezvous at some little distance this afternoon. The ladies went in a carriage, with Sir Charles, and I persuaded Edward to walk with me. We waited till the ladies had set out, and I handed Eleanor to her carriage, while she laughed and chatted, and kept up that delusive gaiety which it is to me torture to see. Her face and form seem thinner every day, and fever glows in the flush of her cheeks. She is very ill, I am certain, but she wont listen to Ethel about herself, and shuns all private conversation with her. They used to ride on horseback together sometimes, but now Eleanor will not ride.

"I am not at all easy about your wife, Edward," said I to him, as we walked along. "Oh," he answered, "she is much better, both in health and spirits." "I think you are mistaken; that appearance of improvement is only excitement. She will never be better, while things go on as they do. Don't you see that you are making her wretched? that your too apparent devoted attachment to another is breaking her heart?" "It is you who are mistaken," he said, with a bitter smile; "I know her better. She does not love me. Her manner, her conduct in every way, tells me she has ceased to care for me, if she ever did. My feelings cannot affect hers, and I am free to let them run their own course, to let the torrent sweep me where it will." "Oh, my dear boy," I cried, dreadfully shocked, "do not delude yourself in this way. You are making us all miserable, and yourself miserable for time and for eternity. Pause and think, recall your right feeling, your self-command, your moral principle. Your poor wife loves you, and you are killing her; and Ethel—Ethel bid me say to you——" "What does *she* bid?" he asked, in a trembling tone. I hoped he was touched, and I spoke strongly. "She bid me say that through your conduct she is unhappy, that you force her to leave this place, and part from you and Eleanor. That you have lost her respect, almost her affection,—that affection which was so pure and firm; that you are no longer the brother of her tender heart, and that if you go on in this way, she must turn from you for ever, with contempt and indignation. They are leaving Rome, immediately." He was silent, and I stole a glance at his face; it was deadly pale—his lip quivered, his breath came thick and short, and he walked on so fast, that I had almost to run to keep up with him.

Seeing his great emotion, I dared not say more, but fervently hoped what I had said might not have been in vain. By this time we had reached the Lateran church; he was exhausted, and sat down on the steps, put his elbows on his knees, and his face in his hands. There he sat, under those great pillars. Oh, man! man! thought I, these are your magnificent works: pillar on pillar, stone on stone—work achieved—difficulties conquered. Man—but "a little lower than

the angels;" and here is one of you—beaten down, subdued, powerless against a vain, hopeless, and now evil, passion! It was a humbling sight; the power of man greater over the visible than the invisible—his hands firmer than his heart! I don't know how long we staid there; at last, for I was very tired, I sat down, too. When we arrived at our place of meeting, they had waited some time for us. Edward had, in a measure, recovered himself; but Ethel's eye soon discovered that I had been speaking to him, and for a moment an expression of pain and wondering perplexity passed over her face. What will follow, who can tell? Nothing more in this letter, which is already, I believe, too heavy for the post. Adieu. I am much better myself, to-day, and Sir Charles has nearly lost his cold. We had a refreshing ride along the banks of the river to-day.

XLIV.

The Same.

Dec. 28th.

While I was dressing, this morning, I received the following note from Edward. I scarce know what to make of it. Its sullen tone is not the right spirit, but at least he has taken the right course for the present, as far as Ethel is concerned, and we must hope for a good result. The injustice and severity of his remarks upon myself I forgive. They are the bitter dregs of his cup of sorrow. I am too much grieved to be angry. We had not seen him for two days till yesterday, when he was hovering about all day, watching, I supposed, for an opportunity of seeing Ethel alone, but she gave him none. He says:—

"I have in vain sought Ethel. I determined to speak to her once more; if she had confirmed your cruel words, I would have fled from her for ever. But she would not. I know that she will never cast me off, and I will not drive her from me, as you threaten—or, rather, you shall not take her away. We are going to Naples immediately; I am not sure when we shall return. Beware how you deal with her. Her heart has already been schooled by others—'strangers have intermeddled with its joy,' and done us wrong—wrong, too great to be forgiven; and as to myself, I will brook no further dictation. What do you mean when you talk to me of moral principle, and right feeling—you, who have so deeply injured us? None but yourself did the work of our separation.

"EDWARD BEAUCHAMP."

We saw nothing of them all day. I mentioned, at breakfast, that they were going to Naples; Sir Charles seemed very much surprised, and said he would go and see them first.

But I contrived to take him in another direction this morning; and this afternoon he went, and learned that they started about noon. "I don't understand this sudden movement," he said to me. "Is it on account of Eleanor's health? Something, I am sure, is amiss, by his strange behaviour for the last few days." I made some indirect reply, and felt exceedingly uncomfortable. Ethel had looked wretchedly ill this morning; but they were gone—gone, at least for the present, and I breathed more freely with the thought. You were quite right in what you once urged upon me—"let Edward know everything," then all future danger might have been avoided; but Ethel thought differently, and I obeyed her. The change that these unfortunate circumstances have united to produce in his character and disposition is very striking, affecting, and lamentable. A heart-broken man is the most touching spectacle we can contemplate. Time was when I could have laughed at the idea, as a thing impossible; but I have seen it, and now I could weep over the wretched truth. However, it makes me no happier to write about it; and here is my darling, Lilian, on a chair behind me, stroking my bald pate with her soft little hands—"Go walk, Paddie, go walk with Lily;" so I'm off. The day was quite warm. We wandered about the gardens of the Villa Borghese, and then about the Pincian hill; and my back was well-nigh broken by the continual gathering of violets, insisted upon by Lily. Here, they tell me, in ancient times, were the famous gardens of Sallust, which stretched from the Pincian into the valley, and up the slope of the Quirinal Hill. It rather enlarges one's idea of a garden, doesn't it? Here, too, stood his temple to Venus; and the portico, one thousand feet long, in front of it; and hereabouts, the only visible remains of the first walls of Rome. Sir Charles is always inspecting some antiquarian remains. I shall come home quite classical. We enjoyed our stroll, and spent the evening with some friends Sir Charles has met here; and now I will bid you good night, in better spirits than when I began my letter this morning.

XLV.

The Same.

Dec. 19th.

You would be able to follow us, by my description of our proceedings since the Beauchamps left us, in our excursions to the country, and to several places of interest in the immediate neighbourhood of Rome. Ethel has looked better, and we have neither of us spoken on anxious subjects, and should have had a time of uninterrupted peace but for a letter of Eleanor's to me, which however I did not show to Ethel. Since I wrote to you we have witnessed an interesting ceremony, a young lady taking the veil—but as a novice only, the white veil, not the black, with the irrevocable vows. It was this latter we wished to see—though I know not indeed why one should wish to see anything so sorrowful and unnatural. It was at the church of San Sylvestro, and we went at nine o'clock. There was a large assemblage of people, great numbers of English. We as a nation are most politely treated here, I must say; have always seats in the best places at spectacles and services (which *are* spectacles), and I am sometimes ashamed of my countrymen, whom I have seen, far from showing reverence or consideration for the feelings and opinions of others, laughing and talking and actually eating luncheon in the churches! Could you believe it? However, on this occasion everybody was quiet, and seemed impressed with a certain solemnity. Service was going on when we took our seats—I suppose the usual morning service. We waited some time; at last a fine old cardinal, one of the handsomest men I ever saw, with white hair, and a noble mien, robed in full canonicals, advanced up the aisle to the sound of music, and sat down in a chair of state on the raised dais of the altar, awaiting the young devotee. He was Cardinal Giuseppe della Porta. Very soon, the lady, accompanied by another, on whose arm she leaned, walked slowly up the aisle towards the altar. The softest, most beautiful music sounded as she approached. She took her seat on a chair placed for her to the left of the altar. She was not regularly beautiful, but very interesting in appearance, rather above the usual height, a graceful figure, rich flowing fair hair, (considered a great beauty here,) and a delicate complexion. She was very richly dressed. Her gown was of the lightest white gauze embroidered with gold, her band was clasped with jewels, which she also wore on her arms and neck; she wore a long train of white satin embroidered with gold, a white veil attached to the back of her head, and splendid diamonds sparkled in her hair. At the altar were seated the Cardinal, some priests in attendance, and a Franciscan friar, the order she was entering. When she was seated and all was quiet, he commenced a sort of oration addressed to her, spoke very eloquently, and set forth the laudable devotion of her who was renouncing the world to become the bride of Christ,—the superiority of heavenly to earthly love, the advantages of a life sacred to penitence and retirement, etc. Her eyes meantime were fixed upon the ground, she sat perfectly motionless, but her bosom heaved visibly, and told of inward emotion. The address occupied some time, and at its close she advanced to the altar, and, kneeling before the Cardinal, received the cross, which she placed next her heart, and returned to her seat. The service in Latin went on, accompanied by the music, and finally she knelt again before the altar, and was crowned by the Cardinal with a small crown made of pearls and flowers. Her destined robe of black was meantime held by a priest, while she knelt at the altar; it was in a kind of flat basket with roses placed upon it. Now, wearing her crown, conducted by the Cardinal, and followed by the priest, she retired from the church. The Cardinal after a while returned, but she did not re-appear for some time, and it was behind a grating at the back of the altar, where she stood with the Lady Abbess. She was then disencumbered of her worldly garments—her rich dress and jewels were cast off—the Lady Abbess robed her in the black dress, white cap, and veil, of the order—kissed her—and then the triumphant music burst forth in full chorus. Grand and overpowering it was, hymning the praises and happiness of the new-made nun, Sorella Maria Placida! She stood for a while at the grating, the Cardinal gave her his blessing, and all was over. Her look of happiness, for so indeed it was, when we saw her face at the last moment, was such as to dispel the melancholy impression I was prepared for. She is a lady of high rank, just twenty years old.

This afternoon we were to have ridden along the banks of the river, Sir Charles's favourite way, but instead we went in a different direction, to the Pauline fountain, whence is one of the finest views of Rome.

There is also a fine and peculiar view looking on towards the mountains from the banks of the Tiber to the Sabine Hills, clothed in the exquisite purple tints of the distance. But the banks are not thought quite safe just now, on account of a threatened overflow, which takes place here sometimes in winter, and does a great deal of damage. You would be amused if you saw me mounted on a little Italian pony I have hired here. They say it is from Naples, and if the people there are as lively as the horses they must be a frisky set. I assure you we have a grand display of horsemanship. Every time I mount, he jumps like a wild cat, and I vowed at first I would never get on his back again; but Ethel encouraged me, praised my management, and I found him quiet enough when we were once on the road, so I have stuck to him, in more senses than one. Ethel has her own horse, and Sir Charles the magnificent white charger he bought from Colonel L——, which is perfect for riding, and such a favourite of Ethel's. I can't describe to you the peace and freedom of our lives for the last fortnight, at least it seems so to me. But I have this letter of poor Eleanor's, and I can't forget her troubles. She wants me to write to her, but I think I had better not. Perhaps in a few weeks I will go and see her. I only hope they will stay where they are.

Eleanor to Mr. Hamilton.

Naples, December 23rd.

Dear Mr. Hamilton,—I am very glad to write to you, if it were only for occupation, I am so lonely and miserable; but chiefly because I know you feel for me, and will forgive me anything hasty or wrong I may say, though I *was* proud and ungrateful when you would have comforted me. We had a tolerable journey here. It might have been very pleasant, but Edward was completely dejected; quite, quite cast down and silent. For miles and miles he never spoke. I dared not, and indeed felt little inclination to break the silence; so you may imagine how we went on. We saw some beautiful views on the way, and the weather was perfect; but what could I enjoy, what could I see, that did not make me feel more and more my own misery? Naples is beautiful—but the beauty and the gaiety sicken me—I am ill too, weak in body as in heart,—I wish I could die and be at rest! I cannot conceive now how I was able to seem so light-hearted in Rome—here I have less motive for the exertion, and I have sunk, sunk, sunk, till now I am quite down, never, I believe, to rise again. It was my pride *there*, what does it matter here? I may spare myself the pain of acting, for there are no spectators. He is out nearly all day—takes a boat, goes alone, and spends whole days wandering about the shores of this beautiful bay. Sometimes he is gone before I am up, and it is often long after dark when he returns, so that I am altogether wretched and anxious; I know not even if he is safe, and there are treacherous winds, sudden storms, and boats are sometimes lost! I begged, entreated, one day, that he would return earlier; but he scarcely noticed what I said, and when I urged it he only laughed—that reckless unkind laugh, which I hate so to hear! If it were not for Mr. and Mrs. L——, who have just come to Naples, friends of my father's, and good kind people, I should be entirely alone, for I had no heart to seek new acquaintances, and Edward now shuns them everywhere. I have tried two or three times to write to my father, but I cannot—I did write to him, for a long time, gaily enough, though the tears often fell so fast on my paper that I was obliged to throw it away and write all over again. Now, I don't cry. It is deeper than that. Oh, what a poor deluded fool I was! to marry a man, and not be certain of his love! for I *never was*. I trembled in my reckless joy on our wedding day, but I was determined to make him love me, and for two years I gave myself up to this dangerous and difficult but absorbing task. I have failed, utterly failed,—worse perhaps, I have made him hate me. Burn this letter the moment you have read it, it is for your eye alone. You know me now, and though I once vowed to myself that no human eye should see my misery, it is some little consolation to feel that there is one I may speak to. But *they* shall never see it—no—my heart shall be "burnt to the socket," "dry as summer's dust," before I will open it to them. I do believe Ethel is pure and good, but she has no heart to feel for me. She would preach to me and sermonize, and it would drive me mad. To see her, so cold, and calm, and passionless, engrossing, whether absent or present, all the ardent devotion of his heart, while mine, eager, warm, restless as his own, is cast away to perish—how do I bear it and live? She is good, and I cannot hate her. But could I humble myself to her! No I will die first. Would to God I were dead! Do write to me, good Mr. Hamilton.

E. F. B.

XLVI.

The Same.

Rome, March 14th.

This evening Sir Charles's servant astonished me by the information that he had met Mr. Beauchamp in the street. "I should think Mrs. Beauchamp must be worse, Sir, for he looked very pale and anxious, and did not speak to me, which was odd, for I bowed when I met him, and made a little stop, thinking he had likely some message to my lady or Sir Charles."

Alas! thought I, it is not odd at all!

Ethel and Sir Charles were both much surprised when I mentioned it. Ethel turned very pale, which his watchful eye remarked directly. He asked her if she was well? feared she was over-fatigued, begged her to lie down, and so on. He proposed our sending directly to inquire after Eleanor, but I thought we had better wait till morning, and then we would call ourselves.

At night, after Ethel was gone to bed, the following conversation passed between us.

Sir Charles—I am uneasy about Edward, and so I think is Ethel. But she will never enter upon the subject with me.

I—It is a painful one.

Sir C.—I cannot do otherwise than believe in her perfect truth; and I respect her reserve too much to intrude upon it. But I may say to you, that this, added to his present excited and perturbed state of mind, makes me very anxious, almost unhappy. I did think, at one time, years ago, that they were attached to each other, and but for your assurance, and Ethel's frank and unhesitating acceptance of my addresses, I should never have ventured to offer her my hand. It was in full persuasion of the perfect freedom of her heart. God forbid it should have been otherwise.

I—Have you ever, my dear Sir Charles, had the slightest reason to doubt her sincerity, her affection for yourself?

Sir C.—Never. Her sincere affection for me is a blessed conviction to which I cling in perfect faith. But there are circumstances, there have been incidents, and instances, in which I felt that I was not entirely trusted. I put all together sometimes, when the subject presses painfully on my thoughts, and they combine to convince me there is a source of unhappiness somewhere — the change in Ethel's disposition (not in character, for that was ever what it is, but in disposition), the loss of her early buoyancy of spirit.

I—That Ethel is a happy and devoted wife, I am certain. She has more than once assured me of it.

Sir C.—Thank God it is so! No efforts that the most fervent affection could supply have been wanting on my part to make her happy. She has repaid me a thousand fold. But I am not blind; if she has not loved him, he still loves her, with a fatal overpowering passion.

I—I am afraid you are right;—(how I longed at this moment for Ethel's permission to speak to him unreservedly!)--and, as you have spoken of it, I would now venture to suggest that you should separate yourselves entirely from their society, for the present. I have long wished to propose this. I will, at the sacrifice of my own gratification, join them, for I believe it will be a comfort to Eleanor to have me; and you shall take Ethel either back to England, or just wherever we do not go.

Sir C.—Whatever you think best I will do. I rely on your judgment, and your knowledge of them both.

He rose from his seat, and walked about the room, his noble head bent down in thought,—his countenance betraying much emotion. Suddenly he stopped, and put his hand upon my shoulder. "Mr. Hamilton," he said, "if I did step in between two young loving creatures, if I did destroy the happiness even of one, it would haunt me to my grave." I replied, "It was Ethel's own act and deed; that he is now the victim of unreturned passion, is his own madness and folly." Sir Charles shuddered. "God knows how I pity him, sinful though he be; to love Ethel, and love her in vain,—angels might weep over it, and call it sorrow. But was it always in vain?—there is the question, continually recurring; yet one, perhaps, that ought not to be asked." I now rose, too, and took a sudden resolution. "Wait till after to-morrow," I said, "till we have seen Edward; then speak yourself to Ethel, with the same confidence you have spoken to me. Tell her all you feel and think, and let there be complete unreserve between you." "I will," he answered, pressing my hand. "You lead me to suppose there is somewhat to reveal; whatever it is, I am prepared to hear it. I only hope and pray that, under all circumstances, I may be *her* comfort and support." We parted for the night.

And here, you see, am I, in spite of my vows and declarations, involved again in this intricate business of hearts, more intricate and distressful than ever. That we are to blame, in the first instance, Ethel for proposing and carrying out, and I for seconding, any plan of reserve or concealment, I feel quite convinced; and yet she could not otherwise have married, and taken what she conceived to be the only means of repairing the past and securing the future. Now I think, and I shall tell her so, that Sir Charles is entitled to a full explanation of everything; and do trust that by this time to-morrow night, one great source of our discomfort on this account will be removed; that he will then be fully acquainted, as I am, with the whole affair, and act with us, and for us, as Ethel's husband ought to do. It was too late to see Ethel to-night, but to-morrow I shall take an early opportunity of speaking to her.

March 15.—I was so bothered all night with my thoughts, I could do nothing but dream. I dreamt I was standing at the top of St. Peter's, and slipping over the smooth brass ball; and then that Ethel was turned into marble, and stood always at the door of one of the great churches. I was very glad when I awoke, and still happier when I saw her in the breakfast-room, her living breathing self. She had the child on her knee, and Sir Charles was standing behind her, with his hand on her sweet soft head. She turned up her face to him; he stroked back the brown hair, and met her look with one of such unutterable love, such deep, fervent, anxious affection, then bent down and kissed her; she rose, and put the child in his arms, and there was a smile of more than peace upon her parted lips, and in her beaming eyes. He looked happy—she was everything—perfect love, perfect truth, his precious and beautiful wife. I had seen all this as I entered the room; it strengthened my resolution, and made me feel certain of a happy result of the coming explanation.

As this is post-day, you must wait till my next for further news, though you will accuse me of leaving you in suspense at an interesting point. Thank you very much for your last long letter, which was a great pleasure and comfort to me. Adieu!

XLVII.

To the Same.

Rome, March 18th.

Little did I guess, when I wrote to you last, talking of to-morrow, that such an alarm was in store for us! Little does it become us to count upon the future! But I must hasten to tell you all about it.

To go on, then. After our pleasant breakfast, we talked over, as usual, our plans for the day. Ethel wished to stay in till the afternoon to finish a drawing, and in the meantime Sir Charles and I were to go and see the Beauchamps. I first walked to the post-office, to put in my letter to you, and, as I was returning, I espied Edward, with hasty steps making his way to our house. I strode after him as fast as I could, and, with some trouble, overtook him. Then I called to him; he looked round, and seemed very glad to see me; and there was a cheerfulness, almost liveliness, in his manner, which was very refreshing. I rallied him on his being so variable and unsettled, and asked him why he had come back all at once. He replied, in his hasty way, "That he didn't think Naples agreed with Eleanor, or with him either; in fact, it was a stupid place, and he wouldn't live there for a million a-year. Rome was much pleasanter." I looked at him earnestly for a minute, and saw the sudden flash of anger in his eye as he perceived me; so I went on talking about something else, and, by the time we reached home, he was in a calm and pleasant-enough mood. It certainly seems to be his only relief and consolation to be near Ethel. Her sweet soft presence seems to allay irritation, and quiet pain. But then, this is not the true medicine; the reaction produced by the remedy makes one dread to allow its application. We went in, and Ethel, Sir Charles, and the child, were still together. Edward almost rushed into the room; there seemed a breathless joy about his movements and expression. "Dear Edward," said Ethel, rising to greet him, "how soon you are come back!" "Not too soon, I hope," he answered, with so much of his old voice and way, I was quite moved. "No, indeed," she said frankly, "if you are both the better for your stay; and you really look better. How is Eleanor?" "Why, Eleanor is better, I think; but Naples did not agree with her either." "Then I am glad you are come back," replied Ethel, "for her health is the first consideration." Sir Charles, too, was very kind; and if he had any painful feelings, he succeeded in hiding them. "And how is my darling Lily?" Edward asked, holding out his arms to the child. She ran up to him, and sat on his knee; and as he

hugged her to his breast, I caught a glance from the father's eye, the first that ever expressed to me such a feeling. I can't tell you exactly what it was—not anger, nor jealousy, nor regret,—no, no! far from all these,—more of pity and deep sorrow. Edward had brought ever so many pretty things for her from Naples,—little bracelets, and necklaces, and coral playthings; and thus passed away an hour or so. Sir Charles went out for a short time; and, when he returned, Ethel said she would go and see Eleanor; so we took her there with Edward.

In the afternoon our horses were brought; I was not much inclined for a ride, so I asked Edward to take my pony, and ride with Sir Charles, and I would walk with the ladies. Edward continued cheerful, and willing to do anything we wished; so he mounted, and they set off, first agreeing to meet us at a favourite spot on the banks of the river, where there is a view Ethel always admires. Eleanor did not feel able to walk so far, so Ethel and I went alone; and delightful it was, as we strolled along. "I wonder," she said, "whether we shall meet Lilian; I told nurse we should come this way." I was glad we were alone, for I wished to speak to her about what had passed between me and Sir Charles. But she began to talk to me much of Eleanor and of Edward more cheerfully, and thought her better; and just as I was about to avail myself of an opening to speak on what was uppermost in my thoughts, the two gentlemen hove in sight, both reining back their horses to keep pace with Lily, who was running along in high glee, quite outstripping nurse—her pretty hands full of flowers she had gathered, and calling out to her father in a joyous voice. We could not distinguish what she was saying till she drew nearer, but it was—"Let me ride, oh yes! take me on your horse, papa!" Ethel smiled. "I hope he won't," said I; "the daring little dear!" "Don't be afraid, she is safe with him." She continued to beg, and Edward got off his pony, and lifted her up to her father's arms. We were still at a little distance, but could hear him say—"Now we will go and meet mamma," and he put his horse, a well-broken gentle animal, into an easy canter. Edward stopped behind a minute, to take his pony, which his servant held, and he led it on, not mounting; and now I can hardly describe to you the rest of the scene, for it all seemed to pass in a moment. Sir Charles approached us, on the green turf—a high bank, with the river beneath; suddenly, under the horse's feet, the ground shook. I suppose he checked the horse, for it reared; the bank gave way, the horse fell back; one shriek from Ethel—they had disappeared. Edward rushed forward, leaped down the bank, and was gone too. I believe Ethel would have followed, but I restrained her. With clasped hands, and a groan of agony, she ran forward, and saw ——but I can't tell you what. I must give it you in the calmer feeling and more coherent words of our after-review of this fearful accident. The horse had, as I tell you, fallen back with the rider and his precious burden. The bank, happily, did not slant at once into the river—there were broken parts that stood out below; on one of these Sir Charles was thrown, but, in the shock of the fall, Lilian was parted from him, and we saw her —my God, what a sight for the mother!—roll down towards the brink of the rapid stream, into which, first, the struggling horse was plunged, the bank not sufficing to break his heavier fall. I believed the child was lost; but, with agility and strength of foot incredible, Edward descended, half sliding, the crumbling bank; already the water had bathed our darling's side, when he seized her, and with a cry of Safe! safe! he held her up in his arms. With caution and difficulty he mounted the bank again; and by this time Sir Charles had extricated himself from the perilous uncertain ground that had supported him, and saw all that Edward had done. He stood for a few moments, his eyes fixed eagerly upon him—then looked up, saw Ethel, and began to make his way upward. Edward rushed with the child to the waiting panting mother, and Sir Charles following folded them both to his breast. You must imagine it all, for how can I describe it? Though saved, they were not unhurt; the child was stunned, and Sir Charles, though he did not complain, was pale as death, very lame, and appeared to suffer. But both parents and Edward were engrossed with the child. "Ride off," I cried to the man, "and bring a doctor, and the carriage." Sir Charles took Lilian from Ethel's trembling arms, and Edward took off his coat, and wrapped her in it, and they chafed her little legs and feet with their warm hands. Very soon, a cry burst from the darling's lips, a loud angry cry, but never did we hear music so sweet. Ethel burst into tears, and I scolded her, though I never loved her so much in

all her life as that minute. Lilian cried lustily—very frightened, and, moreover, a little bit scratched here and there, but providentially no worse. When first I saw her lying insensible in Edward's arms, I thought she was dead—but Sir Charles was really the worst. He gave Lilian to me, and sat down, very faint. A violent bruise on the shoulder, and sprained ancle, though slight considering the accident that caused them, gave no slight pain. "Thank God!" he exclaimed, fervently, "we are saved—and there, Ethel," pointing to Edward, there, under Heaven's help, is the preserver of our child." Tears stood in his eyes, and he held out his hand; Edward seized it; and, at that moment, I am sure none but the most generous feeling possessed him. Ethel was silent; but he caught one glance of tender gratitude, that else could never have been expressed, from her beloved eyes, and as his hand and her husband's were clasped together, she placed her own upon them; one cannot, and need not, try to describe what they all felt. I turned away, and watched the noble horse, still struggling in the water; his head raised up, and his chest strongly resisting the power of the current. And now they all joined me in gazing on their favourite. Her dear ones all safe, Ethel could look anxiously on fine old Starbrow, breasting the current, and swimming for the shore. Some men who were cutting reeds near us, and had hurried to us on seeing the accident, cried out that he must be lost; and as he struggled on, and finally leapt upon the bank, shaking his bold dripping flanks, they declared it was a miracle—he was supernaturally saved. Very soon help arrived, in the shape of a vehicle to take us home; and then, of course, we must all have a doctor. Lilian was put to bed rather feverish and excited, and Sir Charles was laid upon the couch—Ethel watching over them thankfully, with the tenderest care. In the evening, Edward came, and Eleanor with him. He was kind and considerate, and calm, and indeed his conduct has been such as to make me hope everything from him. Both our invalids are better this morning; and with this good report I will conclude my letter, thanking Heaven, from my heart, for all its mercies to us.

P.S.—I should have told you, as some explanation of the accident (which I fear I have not very clearly described), that there had been a partial overflow of the Tiber, a few days previously, but we were not the least aware of any danger existing at this time. There was a similar accident, which resulted fatally, a few years ago, on another part of the banks. I often felt as if it were something of a risk to ride along the high open margin of that river, which pours its thick, rapid, tawny tide deep below us. But it is usual to go there, and very delightful, if safe. However, I hope *we* shall never go again.

XLVIII.

To the Same.

Rome, March 20th.

We have been getting on very comfortably the last few days. Sir Charles is still obliged to keep quiet, but Lily is perfectly well again. I have had no opportunity of talking to Ethel alone, and he seems too happy in her constant presence and her care, to renew the subject with me, so it has dropped for the present. Edward is here every day. They always greet him with kind grateful affection, and this event seems to have endeared him anew to us all. He, poor fellow, looks soothed and happy; it is difficult to persuade oneself that it is "speaking peace when there is no peace," and that we ought not to count on mere appearances. Last night Lily was on his knee when nurse came to fetch her to bed. "No, no," she cried, looking up into his face, (and in those sweet infant eyes the soul of the mother gleams softly out, and smiles,) "No, no,"—she fondled up to him, and tried to reach his neck with her little arms. "dear Uncle Edward!" "Darling!" he whispered, holding her tightly in his arms, "will you stay with me?" "Yes." "Do you love me, Lily?" "Let her go now, Edward," said Ethel.—"Will you go?" he asked the child; she looked at him, then at her mother—something in that look touched him, he put her hastily down, and she ran away. Ethel followed, and as she left the room he gazed after her—in that gaze was the same irrepressible affection, mingled too with a reverence and devotion which raised its character, and redeemed it almost from blame. Oh may his better nature triumph! but I tremble for him—impulsive feelings, like his, answer too soon, too vividly, to present influences; then there is re-action, and they sink. And Eleanor, she comes too, and sits looking on Ethel with an incredulous, longing, weary look, when she thinks no one is observing her; and then she rouses herself, and as-

sumes that air of indifference I cannot bear to see—it is far more painful than her sadness. Eleanor says, "Ethel has no heart." I forgive her, for she cannot understand it. The poor girl came to me yesterday, and sat with me some time. When she came in, Edward was in the same room, writing; when he heard her step he looked up, his glance spoke perfect indifference, and her tone was the same—her look I did not see. He went on writing some time, then folded his paper, put it in his pocket, got up, and, taking up his hat, was leaving the room; but as if he had just recollected there was such a person in the world, he turned back and asked Eleanor "how she felt to-day?" "I am quite well," she answered, with thin quivering lips and a flushed cheek. "Can I take you home?" he inquired, in a kinder tone. "No, thank you." He went away and closed the door. "My dear Eleanor," said I, seeing her look of angry mortification, "you will not let him be kind to you when he would." She burst into a passion of tears. "I don't want him to be kind to me," she cried, "I wish he would not speak to me. It's not kindness I want! Why doesn't he kill me at once? Kind! oh yes, he is kind to his dog!" "My dear impatient girl," I began, taking her hand in mine and trying to soothe her, but she interrupted me hastily. "Dear, did you say? don't call me dear, unless you love me. It sickens me. Didn't he vow before God to love me and cherish me, and what was it—what is it?—a lie!" She shuddered—so did I, inwardly. At last, after many fruitless efforts, I succeeded in quieting her. I made her lie down on the sofa, and took her long thin white hands in mine, and in a few minutes after I ceased talking to her she fell asleep. I am sure she is very weak, she grows thinner and thinner. I remained sitting by her, in my arm chair, but her repose was not infectious. I sat ruminating, and I felt so low, and so perplexed, that I could almost have cried myself, especially when I looked at her, lying there, pale and exhausted, and when I thought of what she was a few short years ago. Alas! we cannot go on in this way—I must come to some understanding with Sir Charles, and with Edward. As I was turning things over in my mind, she woke and started up, said "she was rested, and would go home now." I told her I would go with her, and I assisted her to rise from the sofa. "Dear!" she said, "how very tired and weak I am!" "Indeed," I replied, "I think you are ill, and I wish you would see a physician. "Not I, indeed," she said with a cold smile; "if I were ill, then I might die. But it will take a long time to wear me out—too weak to live, and too strong to die!" "Eleanor," I exclaimed, reproachfully. She interrupted me laughing, "I recollect when I was a young girl, and ill of a fever, I heard the doctor talking to my father, and saying, 'I have great hopes she will get through,—youth and an excellent constitution,' and so on. I was very much afraid of dying, and thought I should, and I clung to the doctor's assurance with great satisfaction. Now times are changed. I wish to die, and I cannot. I have 'no doubt I shall get through'—she laughed again. 'Youth and an excellent constitution,' and all that, you know." I was silent. She stood up at the glass to put on her bonnet, and saw herself—saw the flash of her old gaiety passing like sunshine over death, on her wasted pallid features. "*Youth*, did I say?" she uttered, in a voice in which pain contended with careless pride —"Youth, yes, youth and beauty, once!" She stood an instant, her eyes fixed on her own image, then she turned away—the excitement faded, the momentary pride was gone—and again she wept bitterly. I gave her a little time to recover, then put her arm within mine, and took her home. She asked me to stay awhile with her, and I did. As I sat beside her I took up a small pocket Bible which lay on the table. She watched me, and said in a whisper, "Papa gave me that." Then she cleared her voice, and went on, "Dear old papa, he didn't half like my coming away. He was growing good too, and said I should find comfort there. I can find none. There is none for such as I am."

"This is impiety, Eleanor. They who seek shall find." "I have sought, and I have not found." "Then you have not sought in the right spirit." "Perhaps not. I never had a right spirit for anything, so it is no use my seeking comfort, I shall never find it if it depends on that." I tried to lead her to better thoughts and a softer temper of mind. But in vain. "I am too miserable to learn now," was all she would say. "If you are angry with me, go. It is no use preaching to me. It's just what Ethel would do. She never shall." She snatched up some work, and pretended to be busy, and I bade her a kind good-bye, and left her, with an aching heart. But I do not despair of softening her, in

time, to a different mood, and from my heart I forgive her, poor girl, for she is deeply wronged. She may say what she likes about youth and a good constitution—she is ill; and "wearing out" may be a shorter work than she imagines. I called on her this morning, found her a little better, and Edward at home, and so I go on hoping and hoping from day to day. Perhaps I have tired you with this long letter of details; now farewell! Write again soon. In two months I hope to see you once more!

XLIX.

To the Same.

Rome, March 29th.

As we agreed, when we parted, that no news should be good news, according to the old saying, you will conclude I had nothing particular to write about for the last ten days. We have been very quiet, and comparatively happy. Sir Charles has quite recovered, and is walking and riding again as usual. He seems to seek Edward's society more, and to treat him with all the confidence and affection of an elder brother. In every possible way he evinces towards him the grateful feeling now uppermost in his breast—and yet in so delicate and generous a manner, so frank, and so quiet, that I cannot understand Edward's reception of his friendship—it evidently galls him, and, at times, I could fancy that he suspects Sir Charles of *pitying* him. When Lily is on her father's knee, he does not notice her; when Sir Charles presses him to join us, he stays away. At other times, the child is clasped in his arms, and he will stay all day with us, or near us. But on the whole he is calmer, and I trust happier. Eleanor too is no worse, perhaps better; and Ethel, as she always is, serene and cheerful, and loving. No results were ever more true to their originating causes than these, as I trace them in the characters of my young friends.

Ethel, whom trial has made, I do believe, as nearly perfect as a human being can be—Eleanor, as I have just painted her to you proud, suffering, and too often striving to hide with a false glare the inward gloom—Edward, his energetic life of mind and body become mere passion and impetuosity—setting openly at defiance the laws that should govern him—believing once that he had conquered that absorbing affection which was the growth of years, and on which no arresting hand was laid till the great blow that was to crush it for ever—then yielding again after the long struggle of separation. Do not judge him too hardly; I know you blame and almost despise him, but you must acknowledge he has been sorely tried, and unjustly dealt with. When I begin to think and write about them, I seem to grow quite sentimental. I shall find myself in the end, an incongruous mixture of all sorts of ideas and feelings. I never was meant to figure in a romance, that is very certain; and, after all, I believe it would have been easier to manage one's own love affairs, than other people's. I never got into a scrape I could not get out of, till I was dragged into this. Yet I am happy to be with Ethel. Sometimes I make her laugh, sometimes she scolds me, and now and then she kisses me, and often, very often, does she sit down beside me, and call me her father and her friend. That repays me for all, and it is only in such moments that I cease to regret the past, and to blame her father's indiscretion and our own.

The weather is beautifully fine now, quite summer-like, and we begin to talk of turning northwards, if we don't go to Naples. All I bargain for is, old England by the 1st of July.

April 3rd.—This morning, when I returned from my usual stroll, I found Edward and Ethel together talking cheerfully. There was a serenity, a happy look of rest, if I may so say it, in her whole appearance, that went to my heart like balm. Little Lilian was on his knee, and his head was bent down to her. Soon after I came in, he got up, and by-and-by left us. He looked pale, and his manner was constrained—it had not the repose of hers. Yes, thought I, as he went away, the fire is only smothered, not extinguished! The child ran playing after him, calling Uncle Edward in its pretty way. When we were alone, Ethel said, "Did you think Edward looking ill?" "Paler than usual," I replied. "He was not well just after he came in. I saw him turn very pale, and he put his hand to his side, and sat down. But it was over directly, and he would not take anything." Lilian came flying to her mother's knee, then Sir Charles came in, and we talked over our plans for leaving Rome. It is decided that we go to Naples next Tuesday, the 7th April. I shall keep this letter open till then, and post it when we leave.

4th.—When Edward heard of our intention

(which I mentioned when I called there the same day it was fixed), he was visibly disturbed, bit his lip, and turned hastily away from me. Eleanor seemed not to care. Edward walked home with me. "Why are you going away?" he asked abruptly. "Because the time has arrived for our doing so. We always intended going to Naples, and the season is getting on." "We shall go too. Why should we separate? We can go together." I summoned up all my decision, and said, "No, it is better we should not go together. We had better separate for the present."

"This then is the way I am rewarded for my efforts—if she is to go, what does it matter?" "Oh, my dear boy," I exclaimed, "seek your reward in your own conscience! What other reward do you want? And are you not already rewarded by her kindness, and regained confidence."

"Ay!" he said, "it is precious, but bought at such a price! I tell you, Mr. Hamilton, it is killing me—consuming me, this trial. Look here," he pushed up his sleeve, and showed me his wasted bony wrist, where the large veins seemed starting, and I could see—I don't exaggerate—I could see the quick throbbing pulse beating. "I have not slept an hour together for many months. A night's rest—I don't know what it is, don't know what any rest is, except sometimes, when she has looked kindly at me." The deep melancholy of his voice and manner almost melted me, I could not speak. "But I am a fool," he cried, "to talk to you in this way. You can't understand it, you don't know." "Yes, I do, and I understand you," I said kindly, "but go on in the endeavour you have made, and you will be rewarded. There is nothing a man cannot do, with God's help, if he has a strong will, and a right motive."

"But you take away my motive." "Oh, Edward, think what you are saying! Is virtue itself nothing? Do you call evil good, and good evil? Are you indeed so blinded as not to see the principle that should guide you? have you so far forgotten all that is holy, and virtuous, and happy?" "I don't wish to remember it, I try to forget all things holy and happy. Happiness has deserted me long ago. I should be utterly incapable of any effort if I did not sometimes hear in her voice, and see in her eye, some thought of me, some lingering kindness."

"I cannot conceive," I said, "how you can be with her, and not learn to be what she is. To love what is good is in a manner to assimilate ourselves to it, and by sympathy to grow like it." "Ah, but there I despair. To be like her, I must cease to love her, to love her as I do, as I have done from earliest years. I never remember the time when I did not love her; child, maiden, woman, as each she was my darling, my pride, my past, present, and future, my hope, my heaven! I tell you this love is interwoven with my life, it cannot be separated from my being. I must love her till I die—let me stay near her, it shall be repressed, controlled for her sake; take her away, and I dare not answer for myself." "You only convince me further of the wisdom of our separation. The sooner you learn to act from a higher motive than this, which is mere selfishness, the better. Forgive me for speaking to you so plainly. We shall go, as we have decided, next Tuesday; and I beseech you to remember, in the meantime, that no effort made in a right cause, and with a right spirit, will be unattended with success, to say nothing of the absolute duty and necessity of making it."

He made no answer, we soon reached our door, where I bade him good morning, and he turned away abruptly in silence, and left me.

I joined Ethel, who, with her husband, was looking over and packing up some drawings of hers. After awhile he left us, and she showed me some beautiful books he had just brought her.

"You are very happy, my dear child," I said. "Yes," she answered, putting her hand in mine, and looking at me with her clear soft eyes full of grateful tears. "I have indeed found a peace that passeth understanding—even my own—at last. It was a struggle, and not of a day, or a week, or a year—but it brought its reward, in chastened thoughts and pure affections, and true happiness." "It could not be otherwise, Ethel, with such a companion." "And he is so good to me—from the first, making me feel certain always that I was valued and approved, and elevating me by the continual conviction of my power to make him happy. This it was, laying upon me a constraining delightful responsibility, that first awoke me to a true sense of happiness, and laid its deep foundation; a happiness which is now unbroken as far as regards myself—but there is a cloud yet;" she paused, then added, "I have sometimes feared that I have been very selfish, and have not sufficiently considered the happiness of others. But I could not foresee the failure

of my hopes. Now, when I look at Eleanor, and think of her, my own peace of mind seems to me strange and cruel—such should have been hers—why, why is it mine alone?" "Be thankful that it is yours, my dear," said I, "and trust in providence. This absence of ours may do much. I only wish you would let me tell Sir Charles everything, or do so yourself." "But why now, when we are peaceful and comfortable? why disturb the calm?—let it be." She thinks it would only give fresh pain without doing any good. I am always willing to yield to her, so I am silent, and let circumstances carry us on—we go with the current—and it cannot be long ere I, for one, the oldest voyager, must be carried to the great sea. May it be in peace!

As our plans are quite decided, I shall send this and write next from Naples. * * *

L.

To the Same.

Rome, April 5th.

One more letter yet, from this place. We talk of "decided plans" as if nothing could derange them, while day after day shows us how little we can count on certainties. I am grieved indeed that the tranquillity I boasted of in my last should have been thus disturbed! The very morning after I closed my letter to you I walked as usual to post it myself, Sir Charles with me, and then we went on to see Eleanor; we found her better, and alone. She said Edward had gone out about half an hour before. We had not met him, so I concluded he could not have gone to our house, but I felt fidgetty to return. Poor Eleanor, however, seemed unusually glad to see us, and kept us chatting for near an hour, showing us some things she had bought for her father, and asking Sir Charles's advice how they should be sent, and so on. We asked her to walk back with us, but fortunately she declined, and we sauntered home alone.

The drawing-room in which Ethel usually sits is within another which serves as anteroom and breakfast-room. She was in the inner room painting, when we left her. The door was put to, but not latched, and when we returned we walked quietly in. But the moment we entered, we heard voices, in agitated conversation. "Oh, Edward! Edward!" "You will drive me mad, Ethel!" "I *do* love you, I have always loved you, but don't, don't be so wicked, so cruel, so reckless—here is my husband!" We rushed into the room, but she had fallen—there she lay on the floor, in a dead faint, like the marble image of my dream, but more dead. I cried out, I don't know what, but Sir Charles, without a word, lifted her in his arms, and bore her to the other room. Edward followed in a perfect frenzy of anguish and despair.

"It is not I who have killed her, not I, not I; but you, both of you, you parted us—you have ruined us!" He turned away from the sight of Ethel, and sat down with his back to us, burying his face in his hands, as I had seen him once before, and rocking himself backwards and forwards, as if in the very unbearableness of grief, and he looked so wretchedly pale and thin, his clothes hanging on his shrunk limbs! After I had procured some restoratives Sir Charles asked for, I shook Edward sternly by the arm, and asked him to go home. At the moment it occurred to me that he must have lost his reason suddenly; but at my voice he started, got up, commanded himself, and stood erect before us. His look, first fixed on Sir Charles, and then on me, was that of proud resentment, of an injured man, who has not forgiven the injury. "She," he said, pointing to Ethel's still inanimate form, "she was my destined bride; she was torn from me, by what evil arts I know not; but by whom, you, each of you, can best answer. I sought her to-day, to gain, before you leave, an explanation of that which is yet a mystery to me." "Leave us now," I urged, "all explanations shall be given afterwards—leave us, do, my boy—have patience." He seemed touched by the tone of my voice, for I spoke as kindly and persuasively as I could; he looked at me, earnestly, caught my hand, wrung it, and rushed out of the room.

Sir Charles still bent over his wife. She was long insensible, and he gazed on her in silence, with an expression of the deepest pain. At last, seeing me standing by, he said, "Throw that shawl over her feet;" then again, after a pause, and in a voice choking with emotion, he uttered, "Oh, Ethel! Ethel! didst thou come to me without a heart? art thou not mine, indeed? entirely mine?" A faint sigh told us she was recovering. "Ethel! my love, my wife," he whispered; "oh, yes! *my wife!*" She opened her eyes, and looked around, inquiringly, then closed them again, saying only one word, "Edward!" "Do you wish to see him again?" asked Sir Charles. "Is he here?" "No," I answered her, "he is

gone." "And I am not able now," she said; then, seeing her husband's eyes fixed sorrowfully and wonderingly upon her, she added, "No, I do not wish to see him now, not again, till I have told you everything. Let me be alone now, to rest a little, I am better." She raised her head from his arm, and he drew it away; but seeing his continued look of pain, she seized his hand, and pressed it with both hers to her bosom; he put his arms around her once more, and strained her to his breast with fervour. I left them, and he followed me. "She is best alone," I said to him, "she is always right." "Yes," he answered, generous as he always is, "leave everything to her." He stood silent, at the window, for a few minutes; his horses were at the door, waiting for him to take his usual ride. He saw them, and went down, saying he would go out for a short time, if I would stay with Ethel. I was very glad he went, and I remained sitting where he left me, lost in thought I dare say for an hour. By and by I heard Ethel's step; she had risen from the sofa, and she called me to her. "I am going to my room, for an hour or two," she said, "I have a terrible headache, but I hope to be quite well by dinner time." Her face was pale, and her hands shook, as she gathered up her hair that had fallen on her shoulder. "Yes, go and keep quiet, my dear child," I answered, "and then, as soon as you are able, speak unreservedly to him—to your husband, I mean, or allow me to do so." "I will myself," she interrupted; "from me alone must such an explanation come, but not to-day, dear Mr. Hamilton!" Why not this day, this hour, Ethel?" "Oh, I cannot, I cannot," she cried, pressing her hands to her head; "don't press me, don't be impatient; remember his disgrace, what a story is his to reveal, and I dare not speak it. I might be tempted to say too much. I will endeavour simply to write down the particulars which will fully explain, without betraying him too far." "Well," said I, disappointed, "if you like that better. I do not wish you to exert yourself till you are able." "Listen," she went on. "I have thought over it all. To-morrow, we were all to go to Ostia, with the L——s. I cannot go. You may truly say, I am not able, but you and Sir Charles will go, and must leave early. While you are away, I will put this plan in execution, and on your return the paper shall be ready for his hand. Does this content you?" "Yes, I am willing to leave all to you, Ethel." "Oh, believe me," she said, earnestly, "I am desirous, I must be surely far more desirous than you can be, to unburden his generous mind of any pain. But I know he trusts me—and I know, alas! how he will despise and scorn." "You do him wrong," I interrupted; "this is the first time I ever heard you doubt the perfect goodness, the noble nature, of your husband." "But how can a just and reasonable man do otherwise than despise such weakness?" "He who loves you, Ethel, can perhaps best pardon Edward. And remember, there is a claim, never to be forgotten by either of you, and which I know to your husband will be one for ever sacred." "I know, I know!" she cried, "he saved our child—oh, Edward, beloved, misguided brother, can we never serve, never save you? Must I see you thus, rushing on day by day to such ruin—such despair? God forgive me!" The tears rolled fast down her cheeks. "Yesterday," she sobbed, "all seemed happier—my hopes were so bright—now all is changed again!" I was afraid of further excitement, and begged her now to go and rest. "You may depend," she said, as we parted, "on my doing all you wish. My only desire is to act as is best for others, and to perform the highest duty I owe to the one with the utmost consideration for the other—you understand me?" "Yes, my dear, you are right." I took her to her own room, and left her there, and we saw no more of her till evening. About dinner time I stole in, and saw her in a deep sleep. So Sir Charles and I dined alone; but Lilian—how I blessed the child!—amused us all the time with her prattle. Ethel came in to tea, and said she felt much better, but we could see her headache in her heavy eyes, and we did not let her stay long. He took her soon again to her room, and returned to me tranquil and cheerful. Whatever he felt, he subdued the expression of any painful thoughts, and nothing could exceed the devoted tenderness of his care for her. He seems to repose in her a deep firm faith that refuses to be shaken.

I came upstairs early to write this, and we must leave in good time to-morrow, for this excursion to Ostia. I wanted to get off; but when I found Sir Charles considered himself engaged, and obliged to go, I said no more. The party, in fact, had been made for us. I must to bed now; so good night, my dear sister.

7th.—When I finished writing, last night,

I was far from being easy in my mind; but it was a state of bliss and peace compared with what I feel as I address you now! How can I write it? is it really true? Ethel is gone—and Edward is gone, too; where, we know not. I am off with Sir Charles.

9th.—A day or two has elapsed since I wrote the above, in a state of distraction I need not describe. I will now endeavour to give you some notion of what we have been going through, if I can. We left early in the morning, for that cursed expedition. Sir Charles was out of spirits when we met at breakfast, but said Ethel was better, and intended rising at her usual time. So I was easier about her. Off we went; and of all the tiresome days I ever spent this was the tiresomest. We poked into antiquarian holes, where I could see nothing worth looking at; and pondered over grey rubbish, and old stones, till I should have been asleep, only that my uneasiness to get back kept me from even this small gratification.

It was eight o'clock in the evening when we reached home. Sir Charles seemed as impatient as I was; while we were driving along he struck his repeater, wondered what Ethel and Lily had been doing all day—and, at last, turning to me and laying his hand on my arm, he said, "Have I been a very dull companion to-day? If I have, you will pardon me. You know what an anxiety presses upon me. Yet, believe me, my dear Mr. Hamilton, never, in the earliest days of my happiness, when painful thoughts were far away, and all seemed happy, was my love for her so warm, so confiding, so anxious as now. There is something in Ethel before which fear and distrust cannot live. Yet I feel assured that she cannot be happy now, and therefore I am anxious." "She is worthy, my friend," I replied, "worthy of your noble confidence—your perfect love." "I believe it," he said, in a low, earnest, grateful tone, and sprang from the carriage as it stopped. We ascended the long steps. The door was opened only by the footman; Sir Charles's servant (whom I have mentioned before) was not there. We hastened to meet Ethel, but the ante-room and drawing-room were empty. "She must be gone to bed," said I. Then we went into the nursery, and nurse was sitting by the child's bed; but no Ethel. "Was Lady Herbert not so well?" asked Sir Charles, in a low voice, for fear of awakening Lily. "She seemed much better," nurse replied; "but she went out this morning, and has not returned. Did you not get a note? One was left in your dressing-room." She went out to find it, followed by us both. Sir Charles made no remark, but his anxiety was evident. No note was there; we searched in vain, in every room, and every likely place. As we re-crossed the passage between our rooms, we met the Beauchamps' servant. I was certain something terrible was the matter. He addressed me; "Mrs. Beauchamp sent him to know if Mr. Beauchamp was there; and, if I had returned, begged I would go to her." I saw Sir Charles turn deadly pale. "Is your master not at home?" I asked. "No, he has been gone since yesterday evening, and has not returned." Foolish nurse turned her head away, and began to cry. "Tell Mrs. Beauchamp she shall hear from me immediately," said I, anxious to get rid of the servants. "Don't you know, nurse," asked Sir Charles, when the man was gone, "what time your mistress intended to be home?" No, she did not; she only knew that a messenger had come very early from Mr. Beauchamp's, very soon after we were gone, and that Lady Herbert had ordered the carriage directly after breakfast. Wilson had got post-horses, and they had set off; but she could not tell where to. She asked Wilson, but he said he did not know. "Now don't be so frightened and foolish, nurse," said I; "they will be home soon. Your mistress is quite safe with Wilson." We left her, and returned to the drawing-room. I was distressed and perplexed to the last degree; but I thought not of myself, when I looked at Sir Charles. The ashy paleness of his face, the stricken wonder in his eye, the silence, the dumb inquiry cast on me. I was smitten; shocked, indeed! "Do go," he said, in a hollow voice; "do go and see if you can find out at the Osteria where they drove to, and if the horses are come back." There was a coldness in his manner, that added to my distress. Yes, my dear sister, I felt as if I deserved it; and I obeyed him without saying a word. He rose from the seat he had sunk upon as we entered, and turned away from me.

I went as fast as my old legs could carry me, unwilling to trust my errand to any one else, and made the inquiry; but I could learn very little. The horses had not come in, and the people only "thought" they had gone to Albano. I was in such a whirl and anxiety, that I never thought of going on to Eleanor, as I should have done, but went straight home

again to Sir Charles. He was walking about the room, restless and impatient, and only looked the question, as I entered. When I had told him, "It is no use our staying here, Mr. Hamilton," he said; "she may want us, she must want *you*." "I trust in God, she does!" I interrupted, frightened (though but for a moment, and I am ashamed to confess it) into unworthy suspicions. A gleam of beauty, yes, such it was, the beauty of love and faith, then lit up the noble countenance of my friend, as he spoke. "I see you fear, you are distressed. I have no fear for her. My anguish is not, oh, God be thanked! embittered by a shadow of doubt as to her perfect goodness." (How was I reproved!) "But some unforeseen trial has arisen. She may have acted, perhaps, indiscreetly, on a sudden emergency, yet even this I can scarce believe. I am convinced that she left the letter for me, which would have explained all, and it has been mislaid. But, Mr. Hamilton,"—here the gleam of brightness faded, and an indescribable grief spoke in his voice and trembled on his lips,—"tell me no longer that Ethel is a happy wife, tell me no longer that I am sufficient for her peace. She has endeavoured to believe it, and wished me to believe it, and I acquit you of all intention to deceive me; but I have been deluded, and I am awaking to the truth. May I have strength to bear, as a man, all that may be in store for me! Say no more now," he added, as I was going to speak. Truly, I knew not what to say, and as he was silent, his head resting on his hand in anxious thought, I sat down too,—weak old fool that I am!—I sat down and cried. Thus we were, for perhaps ten minutes; till I, urged irresistibly by the sight of his distress, and the emergency of the moment, exclaimed, "I will tell you all; it is too late for further disguise, and now——" "Tell me nothing," he interrupted; "do not let the excitement of to-night betray you into a revelation of what seems to have been long withheld. Leave it to her entirely; I am not impatient. My sorrow is too deep to leave any room for curiosity." "Forgive me," I replied, "you are right, I leave it to her. But now what do you wish to do? Only tell me." "That you should follow her at once, in the direction she is said to have gone. I, perhaps, had better remain behind. She may require you most; and when she returns, I should like to be here to receive her." "Whatever you think best, I replied; "but you, my dear Sir Charles, you are her protector, her best and dearest friend." "Yes, her *friend*," he interrupted sadly. "I mean, to use the word in its highest sense, the friend a husband alone can be. Come with me." He hesitated a moment, then consented, and we agreed, that if Ethel did not arrive in the course of the next half-hour, we were to start. It was now between nine and ten. He left me, and I was beginning a fresh search for the missing note, when the door opened, and Eleanor came with hasty tottering steps into the room. "My dear girl," I cried, running forward to meet her, and taking her hand, her burning hand, in mine, "why did you come out? I was going to send to you." "Why? why?" she almost shrieked; "can I rest in my deserted home? No! where is he? tell me—where is he?" and her voice rose to a loud wild cry; "deceive me, if you dare! is he dead?" She did not wait for my answer, but throwing herself on the couch, and sliding off it to the ground, covered her head with her shawl, while groans and sobs almost choked her, and the words, "Dead, dead, I know he is dead!" explained to me her agony.

"Eleanor! hush. Command yourself; this is very wrong. I know of no evil having befallen him, still less that he is dead! Be calmer, and tell me all you know about his absence, and about Ethel's." I could hardly get out the last three words. "I know nothing, nothing, nothing," she cried, "don't ask me! I came to ask you, and this is all I get? I ask you. *Where is he?* Oh, God Almighty!" and she sprang to her feet, and lifted up her arms, "tell me where he is!" I began to tremble for her reason; I, unused to such passion, and accustomed to judge of women by my own Ethel. "Dear Eleanor," I said, taking her firmly by her poor thin waist, and forcing her to sit down and be quiet, "hear me, my love. Trust in God, and be patient—he will return." But now a new tide of feeling seemed to rush over her; she clasped me round the neck, and, hiding her head on my breast, she muttered, "Don't be so kind," and cried like a passionate weary child. I endeavoured to soothe her in vain, and she exhausted herself by the violence of her emotion. And now Sir Charles returned to the room; he started at seeing her in such distress, lying in my arms, and looking, as she did, half dead; but he came up to us. "The half-hour is passed, we must go." "Go where?" Eleanor asked, raising her head. I explained. "Yes, yes, go," she cried, "and I will go too. Oh, let me go with you!" Now

this I knew would never do. Besides her being totally unfit for so fatiguing an expedition under such excitement, her presence could do no good, and would be an additional distress to Sir Charles.

"No, my dear child," I said, "you are not able." "Oh, yes, quite able;" and she began to smooth her tangled hair and dry her eyes. "Let me go, let me go;" her hands shook with anxiety and haste. "You are only fit to be in bed, my dear," I urged; "let us take you home at any rate, and we shall see how you are then." This seemed, in some degree, to satisfy her, and very soon the carriage was announced. There was something so cheerless in the deserted air of the room, as we left it; and I saw Sir Charles cast a wistful look around, as if bidding adieu to the happiness he had enjoyed there. We took Eleanor home. She was too much exhausted to make further effort, and I saw her into her maid's care, in her own room, and promised to return to her as soon as I could. Then we proceeded on our way to Albano.

In spite of the assurances I had given poor Eleanor, in my anxiety to comfort her, I had strong fears about Edward. I dare scarcely allow my thoughts to dwell on the possibility that kept suggesting itself to me—haunting me. That daily misery, that continual excitement, that fearful strength of passion—to what was it tending—how might it end? perhaps, how had it ended? And Ethel! Had she sought him, was she his companion? Had she still power, and was she exercising that power, to soften and restrain? I could not, I dared not, answer these questions to myself—all I could do was to strive after patience, and to pray God "for a happy issue out of all our afflictions!"

I must break off here, for this must go, and, moreover, though one is apt to forget it, I have written as much as the post will carry in the shape of a letter. But I will go on with my story to-night, and shall then be able to add more.

LI.

The Same.

Rome, April 10th.

We went silently on our way. It was very dark; a carriage, with lamps lit, flashed rapidly past us. Sir Charles started, and looked out; so did I. We could just distinguish that it was not Ethel's. "No!" he said; and each of us sunk back to his own reverie. At last we reached Albano; and it was late,—an unusual hour for an arrival,—consequently, some time was lost before we could make our inquiries. Sir Charles begged to speak with the landlord; and, after some delay, he made his appearance. To the inquiry whether Lady Herbert was there, or had been there, he said, with good-natured alacrity, he would go and see, and meantime showed us into a room, where we waited. I sat down, tired enough; but Sir Charles paced about, and startled me by a sudden exclamation, holding up at the same time a silk handkerchief,—"This is hers! She must be here!" I jumped up, but I did not recognise the handkerchief. "I know it is hers," he repeated, and he put it in his bosom. I knew not what to think; but now the man returned, and said something in Italian to Sir Charles. "For Heaven's sake, speak English!" cried I. I did not think I might be asking him to do what he could not, but fortunately he did speak English a little, and I understood him to say, that a lady, whom some one at the hotel knew to be Lady Herbert, had been there that morning, had inquired for a young gentleman, and, not finding him there, had proceeded, he did not know where. The man half smiled, and I swore at him privately; but Sir Charles (whom I dare say he took for the lady's father) was unmoved, calm, and dignified; and the man, seeing whom he had to deal with, soon changed his manner. "Did they take fresh horses here?" we asked. "No. My lady had four horses; and the servant, after speaking with her, had induced the postilions to go on." "Had the gentleman for whom Lady Herbert inquired been there at all?" "No; no one answering that description." "Put fresh horses to the carriage." The man retired. "Back to Rome," said Sir Charles, turning to me; "what else can we do?" I sighed; "Nothing. We must go home, and wait the issue of all this." "I will return to Eleanor," I said, in despair; "poor miserable girl, my heart bleeds for her!" "Oh, Mr. Hamilton," he exclaimed, stopping, as he paced along, "I can feel for her now. She deserved a better fate. Youth, beauty, and fresh hope, might reasonably have looked forward to happiness. For me, God knows, I might have profited better by the lessons of a life,—the early teachings of sad experience. Why did *I* look for happiness? Yet let me not complain; I have enjoyed, albeit in blindness, what it is bliss,—ay, bliss,—yet torture, to remember!" His voice sunk low, to a stifled whisper; he

signed to me not to answer, and we were soon in the carriage again, on our road home. All was silent, as we crossed the dreary Campagna; dreary it seemed to me that night, much as I have praised it to you,—dreary and endless; not a sight, not a sound, but our rumbling wheels, and the voices of the drivers, talking to each other. Now and then I fancied I heard something meeting us, some other carriage near us, in which Ethel must be, and I put my head out. But all was a dead stillness; it was the middle of the night. "Shall we go home,—or to Eleanor?" I asked. "If you wish to go to her, do; but she may possibly be getting some rest at this time; had we not better drive straight home?" We did. He cheered a little after we entered the gate of the city; and I dwelt aloud on the possibility of finding Ethel arrived before us. The short distance seemed interminable; but we got home, and I believe we had both of us worked up our expectations to such a degree, that we not only hoped, but fully expected, to see Ethel there awaiting us. We were disappointed. Nurse, however, was sharing our anxiety, and had sat up; when she heard us enter, she came running towards us eagerly. "Here it is! here is the note my lady left!" She held in her hand a small basket of the child's. "Where?" cried Sir Charles and I, in one voice. "Here, sir,—in the basket!" and she presented to our mortified eyes a little heap of cut papers, which you would have been puzzled to imagine had ever been a note. "Here?" he said, in a despairing tone, taking them to the drawing-room, and sitting down to the table; "it is impossible." He began to try to make out the writing; it was hers, and he succeeded in putting a few bits together. "Are you sure it is the same note, nurse? How could you allow it to be destroyed!" Poor weak minded nurse began to cry, managing, however, to explain, that Lily had been playing in the room by herself; that she had afterwards seen her cutting papers, her great amusement, and it struck her she might have taken the note. "I am sure it is the same, sir, for I noticed it was sealed with this," pointing to the wax seal lying among the bits. Oh, the observation and curiosity of womankind! Sir Charles kindly bade her go to bed, and she retired. "This is too torturing," he exclaimed, when we were left alone, and he pushed the scraps to me; "do try if you can make anything of them." I took them with a mixture of eagerness and despair. Here was this precious paper all cut into houses, and men, and cats, and dogs!—not many of these whole, but snipped up into the smallest bits. With a patience I never knew I possessed, I sought out and joined some of them, but they told us nothing, for none came straight in proper lines; and detached words, or, at most, two or three, were all we could read. *Give you—gone—do not be—Mr. Hamil—mine or his—never again—thank—so dear to—grieved*—and so on. Can you imagine anything more wretched for Sir Charles? "Never mind," he said, at last, as I was going on with my vain endeavours, while my fingers trembled, and my eyes, in reality moist with tears, could scarcely distinguish the mutilated words "never mind, we must wait. You had better go to bed; I can't bear to see you so hurried and fatigued." I got up, wrung his hand, and feeling myself fit for nothing, and utterly unable to bear this any longer, I did go to bed; that is, I went to my room, and threw myself on the bed as I was, but neither to rest nor sleep. I don't think he rested at all. He sat up the remainder of the night; and, in the gloom and silence of those hours, God alone knows what thoughts wrung his breast, what fears beset, what sorrows melted there, or what dim comforts arose, to enable him to bear, as bear he did.

Between six and seven in the morning, I went into the drawing-room again; he was sitting in the same chair, as if he had never moved from it; and oh! sister, if you had seen the change one day and night had wrought of that man, so lately a proud happy being, a husband and a father,—rich in blessings!—But he rose with all his own dignity and kindness when I went in; and to my inquiry if he would accompany me to Eleanor's, he answered that "He would go and dress, and follow me in half an hour." Then he added, "You will have had time to see Eleanor, and talk to her first." I appreciated all his delicate kindness, and was going at once, but he would have me take some coffee and breakfast before I went out, and this made me later than I should have been at Eleanor's.

The scene that awaited me there I could not have anticipated.

I was some time at the door of their apartments before any one came. Then it was opened by Eleanor's own maid, who seemed to expect me. She said that Eleanor had been asking for me all night; that she was sure something was amiss; but that Mr.

Beauchamp had just come home, and she did not like to go into the room—I had better go. "Is he there now?" I asked, impatiently. "No, he had not seen her yet." I hesitated no longer, but knocked, and entered the bedroom. There (it was like a sudden vision after the long waiting of the night) sat Ethel—leaning her arms on the table, her brow on her hands, her face as pale as death; and there stood Eleanor, in a long loose white gown, her thin figure drawn to its utmost height, her dark hair down on her shoulders, her face full of angry passion—pale, too, but with those bright spots burning still brighter, like fires on her cheeks, her arm extended, threatening, towards Ethel, and passionate words, such as I hope never to hear again, pouring from her lips. I would have hastened to embrace Ethel, in the joy of this unexpected sight of her, but I was repelled and startled by the look she turned upon me; no kind cheerful greeting, no expression of gladness or comfort at my coming, but a gloomy sorrow, a painful distress—I know not which most prevailed. She did not notice me, except by a motion of her hand, as if to turn me back; and I stood still and powerless. I don't think I can quite remember all that was said. Eleanor was saying, "You know it well, ay, too well, though you look so innocent! You know that through you I am ruined, heart and soul. You have lured us on by your calmness—your soft perfidious calmness, to trust you while you deceived us. Yes! you play with the hearts of others, and smile when the work of misery and murder is done!" "Hush!" I exclaimed, turning sternly to her, "what do you mean? be silent." "Go on, go on," said the low mourning tones of Ethel; "I have deserved—I can bear it all." "You have *not* deserved, and you shall not bear it," I said. "I mean," Eleanor went on (and at this instant Sir Charles appeared in the outer room),—"if you wish me to explain myself, I mean this; that she knew what she was doing when she held tight in her grasp the love of one man, and married another—that she has fooled her husband, and betrayed her friend. Look at me, Ethel, and deny it if you can." "Ethel!" exclaimed Sir Charles; "Ethel! are you *here*?" He was hastening forward, but, like me, paused on beholding her. She sat still, as if unconscious of his presence—totally overpowered; or, as it seemed to me, paralysed and nerveless, and sinking at last, after long endurance, under the pressure of this trial. Her husband stood apart, for the moment, wondering and uncertain. I went up to her, put my hand on her dear head, and whispered a kind word in her ear, as Eleanor finished speaking; then I said aloud to Eleanor, "Where is Edward?" "Where? yes, where?" she cried; "ask her. I know not; I, who ought to know—she, who ought not—she does, she knows! He is hers, hers, not mine." She sank down exhausted. I did not look at Sir Charles, but I heard him walk slowly from the room—from our presence; well might he turn away! But, in answer to Eleanor, Ethel now started from her seat, aroused. "Yes," she said, "I do know where he is. I have brought him home. He came into this house with me. And, now I leave you, and him, for ever. I forgive your unjust aspersions. I forgive you, Eleanor, for you are sorely tried. And I pray God to bless you and him; to change his heart, and comfort you. Farewell." She turned to me, and clung to the hand I held out. "Where is Sir Charles?" He came forward instantly, and gave her his arm, silently and gravely, and we left the house.

The carriage had been sent home, and we walked. Ethel seemed very tired, but he supported her kindly. Still he did not speak, none of us spoke—I, because my heart was too full of sorrow and remorse; and, at the moment, I could not help feeling further distressed by his silence. It had an air of disapprobation, of sternness, of coldness. "Blame thee, precious one?" I thought, as I pressed her hand resting within my arm; "never." And, thinking of it since, the words of an old play come forcibly to my mind:—

"Condemn you me, for that the Duke did love me?
So may you blame some fair and crystal river,
For that some melancholic distracted man
Hath drowned himself in it!"

When we got in, he asked if she preferred going to her own room, or to the drawing-room? She made no reply, but moved on towards the latter. As we entered, he, with a look of pain I can never forget, but still detaining her hand while he spoke, said, "Probably you wish to be alone—I will leave you with Mr. Hamilton," and he was going; but she dropped her handkerchief, and he stopped to pick it up. I saw that she was struck with his appearance and manner, and that she could not utter a word. He did not look at her, but I did; and I saw her straining eyes

following him to the door, and her lips moving, without sound. "Sir Charles!" I cried. He looked back; Ethel, gazing on him, stretched out her arms, burst into tears, and uttered only one word—"Come." As he hastened towards her, I slipped out of the room.

LII.

The Same.

Rome, April 12th.

I closed my last to you abruptly, being called off by some business concerning our departure from here. I sent it off at once, wishing not to delay it; and since then I have heard from Ethel the whole history of her absence, and its cause. But I will go on first, from that distressing morning which I was describing to you when I was interrupted.

I saw nothing either of Ethel or Sir Charles till the afternoon; but I felt sure she had already performed the duty she owed him, the paramount duty of full confidence, which I knew that she, as well as myself, saw, at last, all the importance of.

Towards evening, while I was sitting alone, he came into my room, and I guessed, at the first glance, how it was. He had been out, and looked refreshed, and there was in his countenance a calmed expression, I will not say it was cheerful, for there was still the sadness—yet it was a sadness that had lost its troubled air, like one who was resigned, and happy in resignation. "Ethel wishes you to go and sit with her," he said. I rose directly to go. "But first," he continued, "let me say a few words to you." I sat down again. "I have had a long conversation with her, on a subject with which you have been all along as well acquainted as I am now, therefore I need not repeat to you." He paused; and there was a slight tremulousness in his voice. "I rejoice to hear it—I have always wished it," I exclaimed, with heartfelt gratitude. "It would have been better," he went on, had greater openness prevailed on all sides, from the beginning, from her father's first prohibition. It would have saved much anxiety, much misery. But I do not blame you; I blame none. I can only deeply regret that such a happiness as might have been his was wrenched from his grasp so suddenly, and at a time when trial is hard to bear, and when the shock comes with such fearful power." I looked with admiration on my generous friend, speaking and thinking only of others and forgetting himself. How beautiful is generosity! He might have guessed my thoughts, for, after a short pause, he continued:—"For myself, I am content. Every word of Ethel's is to me perfect truth; I have never doubted, and I never will doubt, her. My delusion was long a most happy one; and I am awakened from it to receive, at the same time, the inexpressible consolation of her assurance, that she is truly mine—mine, unchangeably and for ever. What more do I ask? Shall I not forgive her, that under the pressure of most distressing circumstances, and with an earnest intention to do right, she innocently deceived me? It was easy, indeed, to deceive a heart that trusted her so entirely that no suspicion could possibly have disturbed its faith! But no more of this. As regards myself, I have spoken the first and last words I shall ever say on the subject." "You are worthy of her. God bless you,"—I managed to reply. "You know how she has suffered; you can appreciate—forgive." I could say no more. "I do, I have forgiven." He pressed my hand; and, oh, my dear sister, what a weight was lifted off my mind!

"But for Edward Beauchamp," he said, "and for his poor wife, I am truly grieved. Alas, my friend, my own peace is dearly purchased. His is very dear to me, for her sake most, as well as for his own. To him I owe a debt I can never repay, and as long as I live no effort shall be wanting on my part to restore him to happiness; and I can never cease to be thankful, though perhaps it is a selfish feeling on my part, that I am not, as I once feared, the sole cause of all this misery! What course to take, how to do what I would, I know not. Give me your advice." "To shun their society entirely for the present," I replied; "it is the only course we can take, and we must persevere, and give this plan a fair trial." I then proposed their going without me, and my staying with the Beauchamps, which I am sure would be best; but he rejected the proposal, kindly saying that I was now more than ever a mutual comfort to them both, and we must not part; but I urged it, and he consented on condition that Ethel also agreed. If so, I was to propose it to Eleanor.

I was now going to Ethel, but at this moment there was a gentle tap at the door, and she entered, saying I was so long, she was coming to look for me. She looked jaded, and worn out, but there was a recovered peace

in her voice, and in her kind smile, as I embraced her, and blessed her. Lilian had followed her mother, and she sat down beside me, her hand in her husband's, her darling on her knee. How happy we might have been, perhaps I may say how happy we were, —but my thoughts, and doubtless theirs, flew to the other home; I yearned to console them there; deep, deep pity filled my eyes with tears; and I knew that for Ethel there was no happiness nor rest while those still so dear were suffering, those to whom, in bitterness of heart, she had bidden adieu this day.

I will now give you Ethel's account of her absence. The inconsistency of poor Eleanor's conduct can only be accounted for (but that sufficiently) by the distress and despair under which she labours. She is hardly conscious of the varied feelings which agitate her, and still less is she aware of the strength of her expression of them.

After we had started that morning for Ostia, and while Ethel was preparing to go out with the child, a messenger arrived from Eleanor, with a note addressed to me, or, in my absence, to her, written in the greatest anxiety, saying that Edward had not been at home since the evening before, and beseeching us to come to her, or that I would go and seek him; in short, throwing herself on our aid, in helplessness and misery. She expressed fears for his safety, even for his life, and conjured us to save him at whatever risk. She said she was ignorant of where he might be; her only clue was that he had spoken of riding into the country a day or two before, perhaps to Albano or Frascati.

Ethel (and who can wonder?) was herself greatly alarmed on reading this. His excitement on the previous day, not known to Eleanor, increased her fears. She well knew that no one had the power over him she had, and she took her resolution at once, and determined to seek him. "I felt," she said, "being called upon to act without your advice and co-operation, that I must be independent of all personal considerations; I must trust to the purity of my motives, and the justice and generosity of those who loved me; and I started at once in search of him, first writing to Eleanor to tell her my intention. Perhaps it would have been better to go to her, but I feared to lose time."

It seems, however, that as time passed on, and they did not return, the revulsion of feeling in Eleanor's mind was extraordinary. She declared it was a preconcerted plan for their escape together, that Ethel had all along intended to follow him, that she had betrayed and ruined her—that "it was all over" now —her jealousy and rage burst forth without bounds, and by the time they did return she was absolutely maddened.

Ethel went on her way, urged by inexpressible anxiety, and upheld by conscious rectitude. She had no fears but for Edward; her determination once taken, she did not hesitate or look back. She had written to Sir Charles, left the note on his dressing-table, and believed he would receive through it sufficient explanation. Like us, when she arrived at Albano, she was disappointed, finding no trace of what she sought.

She then went to Frascati, where, after much inquiry and long waiting, she found he had been the night before, but he had left the inn where he staid, early in the morning, and had gone out on foot. She waited some time, and then went out and walked. She had been there before, and knew the paths through the wood, where she strolled along, soothed by the peace and beauty of all around her. It was afternoon, growing towards evening. The softened sunlight flickered through the budding trees, and the ground all about was strewed with bright spring flowers.

Presently she heard voices, and a group of peasant children came towards her, their hands full of these flowers, which they offered her. She began to talk to them. Among the many, mingled in these fragrant posies, was that pretty blue Veronica, with which long ago, in the days of their happy childhood, Edward had wreathed the letters of her name. "Let the Signora look," said one, "at this beautiful little flower! An *Inglese* this morning bought all our flowers, but he threw every one away except this, and this he put into his bosom."

Ethel asked when and where they met him? and from their answers she guessed that he had been wandering about there that morning. That it was Edward, she needed no further testimony to assure her. Too well, though now she could look calmly back upon it, too well was the tender history of the past written on her remembrance! "I took the flower," she said, "from the child, and blessed the pure offering, and the innocent hand that brought it." She remained out till dusk; then she returned to the inn, and, finding him still absent, her anxiety was greatly increased.

She now consulted her servant, a person she and Sir Charles had every confidence in, and from him she learnt that Edward was expected to return, his horse being there, and no orders having been left about it. He also told her that "Mr. Beauchamp had arrived on horseback, and must have galloped all the way, by the appearance of the horse." She bade the man keep watch, and apprise her at once if Edward returned, and then she remained quietly waiting, and hoping every minute would bring him back, and allow her to return. Evening wore on, and night came; and now Ethel, in her increasing and weary anxiety, repented having come alone and unaided, but she would not turn back yet—she prayed for strength and patience, and when it was past midnight she lay down and tried to rest, but she could not. The very silence of the night seemed to bring the anxiety heavier and closer to her heart. The image of Eleanor, ghost-like and weeping, seemed to haunt the dim air, reproachful; those dark eyes, once so full of happy light, looked on her fixedly, with dumb inquiry, asking her for the love they thirsted for in vain—she shut hers, but still the vision was before her; and when she sunk into a dreamy doze, it grew more real and more terrible, and she started up dreading to sleep again—and sat watching for the dawn. At last it broke softly through the room, and by and by she heard the chaunt of early voices, and the stir of life. She withdrew the slight window curtain and looked out. A calm most beautiful morning was promising in the sky. "Oh God," she thought, "does it rise upon his life or death!" so horrible was the fear that began to take possession of her mind. Still she kept her thoughts collected, and lost nothing of her wisdom and prudence. She determined to return home at once, without further delay, and place the apparent necessity of the case in more efficient hands; but to leave her servant with a note from her for Edward, in case of his coming in after she left. Her hand was on the bell to summon Wilson, when a hasty knock at the door announced him, and he came in. "I have just seen Mr. Beauchamp go out," he said; "I can't tell how I missed his coming in, for I have been up all night. I tried to call him, and ran some way after him, but he went so fast, and seemed unwilling to hear or stop, so I came in to mention it." Ethel threw her shawl and bonnet on, and told him to follow and direct her, and she hurried as fast as she could in the direction given. Thankfulness and hope urged her steps; she almost forgot anxiety or pain, when at last she saw him; he was sitting down on the turf, under some trees in the wood she had walked in the previous evening.

She then told Wilson to go and get the carriage ready for their return, and went on to Edward. But I can't remember all she told me, in her own sweet words. I only know it went to my heart, with added sorrow. He was sitting with his back to her, and so did not see her approach. She called gently, "Edward!" He started and turned round. She put her hand on his shoulder, and said, "Dear Edward, why are you here?" He looked up at her, she says, like a man surprised from a dream, and not awake, a wondering glance, a hasty brushing back of the hair off his forehead, was his only reply. "I am come all this way," she said, "to fetch you b
We were afraid you were ill." And now, half her fear returned again, while still no spoken recognition answered her; but the words, "Where am I, oh, merciful Heaven?" in a thick whisper smote her ear. "We were right, Edward; indeed, you are ill." Her voice, soothing as it always is, seemed to recall him to a gloomy consciousness of the reality of her presence. "Why are *you* come here?" he asked; "ar'nt you content with haunting me, perpetually, as you do? I came here to be quiet." A peevish tone, and sullen turning away, spoke the weakness of mind and body. "Listen to me, and don't give way so," she replied; "I want you to come home with me. Eleanor is miserable about you. I have promised her to try and persuade you not to stay away any longer; she needs all your care, and it is so wrong of you, Edward, to leave her thus!" He laughed. "Hush!" she cried, "you grieve and distress me. I did not think you would have taken my coming so lightly!" Grieved you, Ethel! no, no," he answered, rising. "What do you mean? I will come with you, go with you, anywhere! What is it? I don't understand. What do you want?"

"You are quite over-tired and ill. Don't let us talk any more now, but come home with me." "Home!" he muttered, "where is my home? What makes a home, Ethel? What made our home at Longbrooke? Was *that* a home without love?" "A man must make his own home," Ethel answered, but she checked herself. "Come, now." He seized her hand—"Yes, yes; anywhere with you! Stay, sit down here, don't go. Let

me hear you talk again; how strange you should be here! Everything is growing into one great dream, Ethel, and your voice only recalls me to this life—no—not to this life, this death!" He cast away her hand, and turned from her. "This is unmanly and weak," she said; "oh, Edward, if it is yet in your power, if this madness has not wholly taken possession of you, soul and body, struggle against it as you ought, and let us be good and happy once more, as we were in the dear days gone by." "Tell me then, tell me, Ethel, are you miserable as myself?" "No, thank God! I have no unhappiness, but through you; to see you thus, to see Eleanor," — her tears stopped her. This touched him, and she saw he was making an effort, and endeavouring to be calm. After a pause, he said, "You despise me, you call me unmanly. It is true, I am a child. A child without innocence, a man without strength." "I do not despise you. Oh, never think so. I forgive you, I pray for you. Edward, my brother Edward, look up into that sky, see how pure and calm it is; such a calmness, such a purity, is given to those who seek it from Heaven, who, by patient conflict with sin and pain, win that blest reward." "Never, never can it be mine!" he interrupted; "but your words soothe me, Ethel, and with you I will go. I never refused you anything; in all things I have obeyed you, save in ceasing to love you as I do, and that promise I will never give, though you were dying at my feet to wring it from me!" She knew it was in vain to reason with him then, and she walked on quickly, with him beside her; and she made in those moments a firm resolution to part, entirely, perhaps for ever, from him and Eleanor. "It was with an inexpressible sadness I passed these last hours with him. I felt they ought to be, they must be, the last. Such a wreck as he was, I could scarcely bear to look at him. My once beloved brother, the preserver of my child, the husband of my friend—must this be the end? he, for whom I had hoped and prayed for a fate so different! Sometimes, as we drove along, and he grew calmer, the old gleam of kind affection shone out; as I saw it, the tortures of self-reproach entered into my own breast. Heavily has this judgment fallen upon me. Oh, how heavily! But I must give up at last, give up hoping." "Never, Ethel," I exclaimed. "All things are possible to a higher power, and now we can only 'stand and wait.'" Saying this, she kissed and bade me good night; her hand was cold, her cheek wet with tears, and she hurried away. I was going to tell her of my plan of staying with the Beauchamps, but had not the opportunity. I shall go there early to-morrow, and decide it first with them.

Good-bye, for the present. How more than delighted I shall be when I am with you once more! It has just struck me that if I can persuade Edward to return to England, I may see you sooner than I anticipated; my next letter will tell you where to address me.

LIII.

The Same.

Naples, April 18th.

My dear Sister,—The date of my letter will show you that, after all, I did not stay in Rome. But I did not arrive here till a few days after Ethel and Sir Charles, the reason of which I will explain.

You remember, it was settled that we were to leave Rome immediately, and I was very anxious to get them off before any more meetings with Edward, and also that they should leave me, and be gone, before I mentioned my offer of staying with the Beauchamps, in order that I might better ensure their accepting it; for I felt convinced, not from any vain opinion of myself, but on account of Eleanor, that it would be advisable for me to be with them. Sir Charles and Ethel, with my darling Lily, (how sorry I was to part with her!) left, therefore, on the Wednesday morning, early, and, after they were gone, I proceeded to Edward's, feeling, I must own, very lonely and uncomfortable. But I roused myself, and cheered up with the hope of being of use to my poor young friends, and tried to feel at home, as I walked into their rooms.

Edward was there alone. He looked better, and seemed glad to see me, asked "how we all were this morning," and said, he was on the point of coming to us. Ah! thought I, I have cheated you, Edward. He went on talking, rather excited, for some time, evidently avoiding any recurrence to the events of the last day or two. I asked after Eleanor, and he said, he believed she was pretty well, but she was not dressed—he had breakfasted alone. He added, that he would walk back with me. "But," said I, "I came to tell you that Sir Charles and Ethel are gone, according to their intention, to Naples; they left this morning. "Gone!" he cried; and I saw by the compressed lips, and the sudden colour that flew into his face, that he was sur-

prised and angry. "Yes, they are gone, and I have stayed behind, to spend a little longer time with you and Eleanor; she once kindly asked me to visit her, and I thought my company might be some little comfort to her now she is so delicate." He bowed, politely, but very coldly, as if to a stranger, and only said, "they also purposed leaving Rome immediately." "I don't mind where you go," I persevered, "place will be all the same to me, where you and Eleanor are." There was a bitter irony in his tone, as he remarked, "Sir Charles Herbert will feel the loss of his companion." "Oh, no, they can spare me very well," I replied. At this juncture, the door opened, and Eleanor appeared; I had heartily forgiven her for what had passed when we last met, and was going forward to greet her kindly, but she stopped short on seeing me, bent slightly in recognition, and glided back, closing the door after her. Altogether her appearance had more the air of a ghostly apparition than reality. I was surprised. "Eleanor is offended with me," I said. "What for?" "Indeed, I cannot tell you," he answered; "her caprices have become matters of indifference to me." I looked at him, earnestly, sorrowfully, and made no remark; he seemed ill at ease, and said, at last, that "I should hear from him about their plans." I took the hint, and left them; pitying, from the depths of my soul, these poor perverse children, feeling no anger, but a sorrow, perhaps more bitter than any that had touched me yet; there was such a thorough unhappiness in what I had seen, unredeemed by a single point on which to build a hope of better things, such an utter turning away from the right path, such a blind fatal adherence to the wrong. Yet it was no common trial, no light suffering, that had wrought all this—few have passed unscathed through such a furnace—they who have are indeed purified, and let me, as yet, pronounce no sentence on those whose seared and blighted hearts are still heaving from the struggle, burning and fevered. God grant the good work may be accomplished, though I may not live to see it.

I took a long walk, to the church of St. John Lateran, whence there is a very wonderful and beautiful view. There is now a green luxuriance and fragrance over the country, very delicious and refreshing; the warm glow of noon-day shone around me; gloomy as I had felt, I could not resist its influence. I sat down on the steps where, some months before, I had seen Edward give way to distress and despair, and the words of the beautiful Psalm came into mind, "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bonds asunder. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves there of are still." I was comforted as I thought over it, and went back happier and more hopeful, and wishing I could impart my comfort to others.

I spent a few hours when I got home in packing and arranging my things, for wherever I go it will be from here. I have got several pretty things for you, old lady, which I expect you will admire, a great variety too; a beautiful piece of silk for a gown for you, which a friend of Ethel's got from the Jews! "What d'ye think of that, Madame?" something rich and rare, I assure you. Then, here's an elegant cameo to fasten up your fine lace frills, and a mosaic bracelet, with a picture of a dog, the image of your fat old Fido, upon it. For your table or chimney-piece, behold a pair of slender bronze candlesticks, standing on birds' claws, and an antique lamp, so it is called, which Ethel said I must have, it was so pretty, but to me it looks only like a round dish with a curly tail—(I suppose that is my want of taste). One thing, however, we must all agree in admiring, and this is a small copy of a beautiful picture, "Raphael's Madonna della Seggiola," the sweetest mother and the finest child you ever saw. Now there's something in this one can really love, but I cannot understand the ecstacies I have seen people go into over cold marble, only half of a thing either, a woman without a head, and a man on one leg! They look to me so absurd, I can't help laughing.

Sir Charles insisted on leaving his man Wilson with me for a few days, so that I was not left quite without a friend. In the evening I wrote the following note:—

My Dear Eleanor,—I was pained to see, by your reception of me this morning, that I was not so welcome a visitor as you have hitherto always made me. I am afraid I have offended you, I am sure very unintentionally; if I have, pray forgive me, and let us be friends again. I came to you to offer my company for a week or two, or for as long or short a time as you like, and you must tell me whether you wish me to come or not. You know I am always glad to be with you, and I think, as you are better, we might make some pleasant excursions together this fine weather,

and see something of the country. I must return to England soon, and, if I join you, I shall prefer going about a little with you, to going so far as Naples, before my long journey home. I wish you and Edward would come back to England too. Let us go home together.

Believe me, always, your affectionate friend, R. C. H.

Wilson took my note, and returned very shortly, saying, "there was no answer!" "Indeed!" said I. "Was not Mrs. Beauchamp at home?" "Yes, for her maid took the note in, and brought back that message." There was no word from Edward either. I waited all next day, expecting to hear from him, and in the evening called there, but was told they were out. So I desired Wilson to get all ready for our start next morning for Naples.

We had a very good journey, and I was glad to leave Rome, for I could enjoy it no longer. They were delighted to see me again. We got here in good time yesterday, and I am already amused with what I have seen. I think my frisky Neapolitan pony was a very good type of the character of the people. They are uncommonly lively; they run and laugh, and the little beggar-boys jump about in extraordinary ecstacies of entreaty and poverty, and cry out that they are dying of hunger!

They are generally half naked, with fine brown limbs. One pretty girl, with whom Ethel exchanged some words, went away with a merry face; I asked the reason. "Why," said Ethel, "she tried to persuade me, with that face of hers, that she was ill and miserable, and when I told her I thought she was mistaken, and that she looked well and happy, she laughed and ran away." She looked a droll creature, with arch black eyes and lively little figure; when we came back along the same walk she was dancing prettily enough, while an old man, sitting on a step, was playing on a sort of pipe. She saw us as we went by, and gave us a good-humoured nod, or something between a nod and a curtsey, as she bent and bounded and turned in her dance.

Before we ended our stroll we were often accosted by one set of beggars after another, and their volubility was surprising. "What in the world do they say, my dear?" I asked. "Oh," said Ethel, "you lose all the fine compliments by not understanding. They are telling you that you are so handsome, have such a beautiful expression, and are altogether charming." "Bravo," cried I, "they are the first who have found it out; they have not called me handsome for nothing; here my lads!" I scattered the *baiocchi*, and they flew after them, like chickens after crumbs.

We are in a very pleasant house on the Chiaja, a long wide esplanade, looking out to the sea over beautiful gardens, which here clothe the shores, and perfume the air from fragrant flowers, orange trees and myrtle, and a thousand other. The air however is variable, and not so mild and calm as Rome. Ethel seems much recovered, indeed quite well again, and, like a dear good creature as she is, makes us all happy by her kindness and cheerfulness. There seems to be a perfect understanding between her and Sir C. If it were possible, his tenderness and care of her are more than ever constant and watchful, as if he understood all she had gone through, and longed to make her way for the future easy and happy. We never revert to what has passed, and as yet we have had no letters from Eleanor or Edward, not even a line to Ethel from either. I suspect Eleanor's feeling towards her has changed a good deal; it always appeared to me peculiar—not jealousy, there was nothing in Ethel's conduct to encourage that; it was a less common feeling, a despair, as it were, of winning the love of her husband, and a sullen submission to the wretched conviction that his heart was given, and always had been given, to another; that other, by her purity, goodness, and gentleness, disarming suspicion and jealousy, but increasing the despair. But now a jealous anger possesses her—she can no longer endure the sight of her rival, her passion wrecks itself helplessly and blindly, and Eleanor, poor Eleanor, is utterly miserable. I hope we shall hear from them soon, or I shall feel anxious. Conclude all is well with me till you hear again. I may be longer than I have been in writing again, for I shall have less to say now, at least I hope so. You must have been quite overwhelmed with letters lately, but I don't apologise for that, because I know you like to hear everything. We intend to be a month here and about the neighbourhood, then I turn northwards. Farewell. God bless you and Old England!

LIV.

Edward to Ethel.

Rome, April 16th.

Ethel, what does all this mean?—this

abrupt departure, this silence, this complete separation? Have I so deeply offended you that you will speak to me no more? What have I done since the morning we met last, to merit this coldness, and reserve, and unkindness?—for you turn away from me; you shun me. Tell me how I have offended you, and I will beg your pardon. I was promised an explanation, by your friend, Mr. Hamilton. This explanation, it seems, is asked for always at an inconvenient time. I shall make no further demands from him; but from you, Ethel, I claim, what I have never forfeited, your affection, your kindness, and your confidence. Let me hear from you soon. E. L. B.

LV.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Naples, April 21st.

Yesterday morning, Ethel brought me a letter just received from Edward. It expresses no intention of leaving Rome at present, which I have been daily expecting to hear of. Ethel has written very kindly to Eleanor, telling her everything she can to amuse her, and acknowledging in that the letter from Edward. I can see that this caution and reserve galls Ethel's heart, but her judgment commands, and she obeys. She is a woman of true courage. We went out the other evening, to sail on this beautiful bay, and Ethel sketched a charming view of Naples from the sea. I really enjoyed the sailing, and could almost understand "the sweet laziness" the Italians are so fond of, as we skimmed along so lightly, with just breeze enough to fill our canvas, the sea bluer even than the sky, and the golden light of approaching sunset making all things glow and sparkle. I watched Sir Charles, as *he* watched Ethel; I was too idle and too comfortable to talk, so I only thought, and my thoughts were pleasant, for they were guided by what I looked upon—the devoted affection that breathed in the countenance of a being the most generous and noble-minded it has ever been my happiness to know; there were lines of care in that face, anxious thought on the brow, pensive feeling in the eye; but, blending with, and reigning over, all, was that passionate tenderness, that absorbing admiration, lover-like yet serene, for her who is worthy of it all. Can I praise her more? She sat drawing, ever and anon raising her sweet eyes to the glorious landscape, in silent delight; then, as the evening air blew cooler, and the lights faded, he wrapped her in her warm cloak, and we drew nearer each other, and began to talk. Sir Charles had been at Naples before, and he was planning some excursions for us. Half an hour brought us pleasantly to our landing-place, and I don't think I have passed so agreeable an evening since I came to Italy.

While I was writing, our letters came in. Among the rest, the following to me from Eleanor:—

My Dear Mr. Hamilton,—I know I don't deserve that you should give a patient reception to this letter; I have been hasty and unkind, and I can only trust to your goodness to pardon me. I have not been so well since you left, and in my loneliness and weakness I missed you; and then came the consciousness that I deserved you should leave me, and I repented my folly. But you don't know the bitterness of my heart! To what may I not be driven! I fear myself; I dread to be left without a friend. Oh, don't forsake me, but write to me, and be kind to me again; and come to me when you can. But not now; Edward will not have it so. He is angry, and says he will see you no more. He says, too, that we are to leave here next week. It is getting warm, and I know we ought to go to the country, if I am able. Gladly would I go anywhere in the world with him, but his heart goes not with me.

I wish Ethel would not write to me; I cannot write to her; I dare not think of her—I can never see her again. I fear every hour Edward will propose going to Naples, for he is as restless and impatient as ever; and I could not bear it. Anywhere she is not I will go. Don't tell me of her goodness, and her kindness; it is mockery. Don't tell me she loves me; it is impossible. Don't, for God's sake, don't tell me she pities me, for that would madden me. I dare not write any more, my head is so bad; and my eyes burn. Write to me. I am not afraid of your pity; and I do earnestly entreat your forgiveness.

Your grateful and penitent, E. B.

Poor dear unhappy girl! I did not show the note to Ethel, it would have grieved and shocked her so. But I wrote to her directly, as kindly as I could; and I will write again to-morrow. I told her that I had forgiven, and never would forsake her; that I would write to her very often, and come and stay with her as soon as practicable; just as I

would speak to a weary child—a sort of lullaby! I intend writing to Edward too; and I think we shall soon be friends again, for Ethel's sake. I would go to Rome to them at once, but that I fear to make matters worse.

Lily is pulling at my coat tails, to come out with her, so I must have done. She is the one who talks most about "Uncle Edward;" she said to us, the other day,—"Papa love Uncle Edward, because he take Lily out of the big river." I saw the tears spring to Ethel's eyes. "Yes, my love," her father said, and kissed her fervently.

Here we go! I am the old horse, and Lily is the driver; and here are ever so many little reins to be tied to me for fear I should *run away*. Ah, the dear child doesn't know yet she has me by the heart-strings!

Farewell.

LVI.

The Same.

Naples, May 2nd.

There is little rest for us. I have only a few moments to tell you we are off for Rome. We have just received the enclosed from Eleanor; I took it to Sir Charles and Ethel; they said, directly, "You must go." I looked at Ethel, hesitatingly, for a moment, not about going myself, but about her, when Sir Charles said, "And you, dearest Ethel, would you not wish to go? You may do some good now; you are able; and I will stay here with Lilian till I hear from you." She looked her gratitude. "Yes, I will go. I will be ready to accompany you, dear Mr. Hamilton, in an hour's time." "Right," said I; I felt that it might be the last service Ethel would have an opportunity of rendering to her poor friend. Sir Charles sent for Wilson, and gave orders for our departure, and we shall soon be off. I trust in God we may find Eleanor able to see us.

What a comfort that Ethel is so well, so active, and energetic! Her powers seem to rise with the demand upon them, as I have always observed is the case with great minds; she is ready for every circumstance when it arises, though she has often distrusted herself, and trembled at the thoughts of what may be required of her. If we are likely to be long in Rome, Sir Charles will join us there. We shall see. Adieu! in great haste.

Eleanor to Mr. Hamilton.

No date.

Since I wrote to you, I have been very ill. I am in bed, and not able to get up. I think I am going at last. Edward sent for Doctor G——, and he brought another physician, after seeing me. I should have been very glad to see you once more. It is not——

Evening.—I have asked Edward; he consents to my asking you if you can come. There are such strange wild thoughts—I don't know how——

I began this yesterday, but I can scarcely see what I have written. I am better now. I think if you took the Bible in your hand now, and talked to me, I might be comforted. But I am a coward. I don't know whether I hate this world, or fear the next, most. I would die, but I have not made my peace with God. If I never see you again, God bless you! Forgive me, and come to my grave; and tell Ethel, though we are parting for ever, that through all my errors, and rashness, and remorse, I have done her justice. I believed her worthy of that which I would have given all to win,—which I could not have possessed without triumph—which I could not calmly have rejected as she has.

I cannot write any more—but I have more to say, for I think we shall never meet again.

Write to my father—oh, my dear father—I saw him last night standing crying by my bed. I cannot comfort him—you must. Give him back that little Bible—tell him I loved it—for his sake—oh, was that wrong?—tell him—I bequeath to him—all my—everything—the world— * * * * * *

LVII.

Edward to Mr. Hamilton.

Rome, April 29th.

Eleanor is very anxious to see you, and I hope you can come to us. She had been extremely ill. I have called in the best advice. She is in a high fever, and occasionally delirious, but she would write to you, so I am told, and it has made her worse; you may judge from it how she really is. I hope not in any present danger. E. L. B.

(This note did not arrive before Mr. Hamilton had left Naples.)

LVIII.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Rome, May 13th.

We had not had time to send a letter to apprize them of our both coming, so that our speedy arrival was unexpected. We met

Edward on the steps as we walked up from the carriage to their rooms. He started back when he saw Ethel, for a moment distrusting his sight; then meeting her, and taking both her hands in his, "Ah!" he said, "you are come, like an angel of mercy!" Delight, rapture, triumph, lighted up his face, and his eyes filled with tears. "But Eleanor—how is she?" we both asked. "Better, better, I hope," he replied hurriedly; "she has been wishing to see you very much. It will do her good, I am sure." Here we were joined by Dr. G——, a very kind and clever person, whom we had known before. Edward begged him to tell Eleanor of our arrival. "How do you think she is, Doctor?" said I, taking him aside. "I have not seen her yet to-day," he answered, "but she is very ill indeed. Intermittent fever, working on a frame already weakened almost to the last degree, has placed her in the most precarious state. She may possibly recover, but, humanly speaking, there is scarcely a shadow of hope." He went in to see her. Ethel looked at me anxiously. "He thinks Eleanor very ill indeed," I said. "But not in any danger," said Edward quickly. "In great danger," I said, looking steadily at him. A momentary expression of alarm and pain agitated his countenance, but it passed away, and he said coldly, "I shall speak to Dr. G—— myself."

The Doctor now came in. He had found her much the same, no better. She wished to see me, and I went to her room. Her face, except the two spots of rose colour on each cheek, was as white as the pillow she lay on. Her burning hand lay powerless on the bed; I took it and kissed it, and spoke gently to her; she cried very much, and did not speak for some time. At last, she thanked me for coming. "I am so glad to see you," she said, half sobbing, "but I don't wish to see Ethel. It is very kind of her to come, but I wish she had not. I cannot bear to see her." "Well, my dear," I said, "never mind. She came only to please you and nurse you, and you need not see her, or any one, if you don't wish." "Oh, Mr. Hamilton!" she exclaimed, "nothing can ever please me any more, no nursing can do me any good. I know I am very wicked, very childish, very unreasonable, but I can't help it!" She pushed away from her brow her hair and cap, closed her bright shining large eyes, and seemed quite exhausted.

They brought her some nourishment, which she took, and, when we were left alone again, she said, "I am better now—read to me, you know what—out of that book you call blessed, but which is yet a sealed book to me!" I obeyed her. I read, and spoke to her of heavenly love, of mercy, of the wisdom from above, which is gentleness and peace, of the mansions of the Father's house—of the Saviour's boundless compassion, of the blessed effects of penitence and prayer. She listened in silence, and wept, and before I left her she seemed comforted. "But not to-day," she whispered to me—"not to-day, to-morrow I will try to see her." She glanced nervously at the door, as it opened, as if she dreaded the sight of Ethel.

Towards evening the fever increased, and she became slightly delirious. Her thoughts all seemed to wander in one channel, "What a long dark night it is," she murmured—"and he never comes back." Edward was in the room, and heard her. She went on. "Oh no—don't do it, Edward! don't kill me. This is a sharp cold knife—it will kill me—oh don't! don't!" He hastily left the room.

Next morning, after a few hours' rest, she seemed a little better, and told me she would see Ethel; so I fetched her, and led her up to the poor girl's bedside. She turned away her eyes as Ethel approached, but held out her feeble hand. Ethel bent over her and kissed her, and Eleanor felt that her face was wet with tears. She turned, and looked wonderingly upon her. "Ethel!" she said, "do you weep for me?" Ethel could not answer. "I did not think," continued Eleanor, "that you cared for me now so much. I did not think that you could feel for one like me." "Dearest Eleanor, don't talk so—only let me stay with you, and show you how much I love you, how much I am grieved for you." "Why should you grieve for me?" asked Eleanor, the perversity of helpless pride returning for a moment, "To see you so ill and weak." "Sit down, Ethel, and let me talk to you." I left them together; and Ethel told me afterwards what had passed—how Eleanor had seemed at first to shrink from her, then gradually grew more confiding, and spoke at intervals, when she could, of herself, her illness, and danger; and of the past, of their early days, and of Longbrooke and Buckstead. And she dictated a few lines to her father. But she never mentioned Edward.

In the meantime I walked out with him. We strolled, scarce knowing where we went, along the banks of the river till we came to the spot where our accident happened. The

yellow Tiber flowed peacefully on, the turf was a fresh green, and the people were singing at their work. "I did not think," I said, stopping, "that I should ever be at this place again—but I have been brought back to Rome only to new anxiety, perhaps to see Eleanor die!" He started at my words, pressed his hand to his side, and turned pale. "I know what you would say," he answered in a hollow voice, "that I have done it." "Then I need say no more," I rejoined; "if at last you see this, if conviction has been forced upon you, painful conviction, it is enough." "I told you," he said, "there was a curse upon me, and it will go with me to the grave." "Edward, there is a curse on no man. It is impiety to say so. Every man has it in his power to struggle with and overcome evil. It is not too late. You see your madness, your cruelty; be firm and vigorous and hopeful in a new and better work." "It is all in vain," he cried; "I have lost everything, all affection—all esteem, my own, hers, yours—I know it. And I am the murderer of my wife. I see it all. Last night those words of delirium struck upon my ear—a knell of condemnation." "God grant she may yet live!" I said, as new hope sprung up within me. "She will only live to misery," he answered; "I have no power to make her life otherwise. May she rather escape this wretched being, and I will hide my head in some corner of the world alone."

I turned homewards. "But, Mr. Hamilton," he went on, in a firmer tone, and with something of his old dignity of manner, "I am again tempted to demand from you what I have long asked for in vain—the explanation you promised me. I will know how it was, and why it was, that Ethel, evidently acting under some latent influence, changed her old and fond affection for me, into the cold, cautious, kind, considerate feeling, (he spoke with irony,) which she now seems to entertain. It has been only in moments of emotion, and great excitement on my part, that any expression of affection has escaped her; and I cannot but believe from these, and from what passed on that morning when she fainted away, that something with which I am unacquainted has shaped our destiny, and marred our former peace—that she might—oh, I tremble to utter it!—that she might have been mine—that all this misery might have been spared! Tell me, Mr. Hamilton, tell me, on your sacred word, was it her own act and deed—was she uninfluenced—was she free?"

"There is an explanation," I began. "There is, yes, yes, I know it," he interrupted impatiently. "Give it to me. Don't be trifling with me any longer." "I must have Ethel's permission," I said, "or at least inform her of my intention of speaking openly to you." At this moment we met a messenger coming to tell us that Eleanor was worse, and that we must hasten back. We hurried on in silence. When we reached home, we found that in being moved from her bed to the couch, at her own express desire, she had sunk into a faint, or state of insensibility which still lasted, and from which it was believed she could not revive. Ethel was watching by her when we entered the room. Every possible restorative and stimulant was applied. In about half an hour, she stirred and awoke to consciousness. We were all standing near her, Ethel nearest. "Oh Ethel," she whispered—"Come close to me. Kiss me. I have had such a beautiful dream, I have been in heaven!" Ethel kissed her, and murmured some soft kind words. "You were there, Ethel, and he was there! Edward—where are you?—Come near me." He approached—she smiled—but his face was darkened—pain, remorse, grief, were there. "Give me your hand." He did—she tried to clasp it, but failed, and sunk again, not, as we thought, to the sleep of death, but into the state of trance from which she had but just revived. Ethel and the physician have watched beside her all night. This morning she has again recovered—it may be only transiently, as before.

I must now despatch this letter. Adieu.

LIX.

Sir Charles Herbert to Mr. Hamilton.

Naples, May 6th.

Dear Mr. Hamilton,—I have just received your note, and Ethel's, and am thankful to hear of your safe journey and arrival in Rome. I shall hold myself in readiness to join you, according to the probabilities of your absence, and if you are likely to be detained long I will come. This is the first time since our marriage we have been separated, and I console myself with the thought that Ethel is happy in the performance of her duty to her poor friend; a labour of love, I am sure it is, and I trust that good only can result from the step you have taken, a deviation, certainly, from the plan we had marked out for ourselves.

I have been thinking much, in my solitude, of our future course, and both my judgment and inclination lead me towards a return to England. I cannot but think that Ethel will find in home the best solace for all past sorrows, and the best field for the exercise of those duties and affections which will constitute all her happiness. As I once told you, long ago, I do not fear that she will ever feel the want of pleasant interests, or the absence of any means of intellectual enjoyment; for her mind there will be ample food, and I pray to God, that henceforth, and for ever, her heart may be at rest, in the holy calm of domestic love.

My earnest desires, therefore, turn to our English home, which for me has yet to be hallowed by the presence of a wife—the presence of Ethel! I have yet to experience that happiness, the purest and dearest on earth. My heart yearns for it; and if I have been taught, by former experience, and by a late trial, to receive in a chastened spirit the undeserved blessings given to me, and to temper the anticipations of joy by the recollections that force themselves upon me, I am not the less grateful, not the less content. Calmer, perhaps, but deeper, will be the current of my bliss, flowing from the blessed certainty, that I have won, at last, my highest earthly prize, for the possession of which, though it seemed mine, I had already trembled; won, I fervently believe, to keep for ever.

But I need say no more. You understand me, and I may be intruding on your occupied time. Write soon, and tell me how you go on, and especially how Edward is. In thinking of home, I venture to hope, that even his being near us there would be less hurtful to his peace, and more conducive to Eleanor's, than our present life of excitement and continual change.

God bless you, my good friend. Always remember, that in our visions of fireside happiness you must be included. Lilian sends her love to you.

Very faithfully yours,

C. Herbert.

LX.

Mr. Hamilton to his Sister.

Rome, May 8th.

We had letters from Naples this morning, and have since written to Sir Charles to come here, for we could not think of leaving Eleanor while she continues in this state, and the medical men say it is impossible to fix the term of her illness, whether for life or death. I was a little uncertain of the effect his proposed coming might have on Edward, but he heard of it with perfect indifference, and made no remark. I had not any opportunity of speaking to Ethel alone, for a day or two after my last conversation with him. She was constantly engaged in the sick-room, or in taking some little rest. But for the last two nights we have none of us rested much; the room or rather closet in which I have a little bed is next to Edward's, and I can hear him nearly all night. He gets up and walks about, then I hear him going out of his room to Eleanor's door, waiting there, and pacing the passage, and in short, the very wandering spirit of unrest. So I cannot sleep when I would. This morning, just as I was dropping off into a nice doze, a strange dream beset me, and I jumped up in such a fright you can't conceive. I thought I was standing on that high bank of the river with Ethel; suddenly the waters rose and swelled, and ap proached higher and higher, nearer and nearer to us. I tried to draw her away, but she was rooted to the spot, I durst not leave her—the water reached us—I pulled her away, but the stream tore her from me; I heard her shriek, and woke, with my hand clenched, as I had grasped her dress; I felt as if a piece of it was in my hand—it was horrid. I tried no more to sleep, but got up, and have been wandering about all day from room to room, trying to do what I could for their comfort and my own.

9th.—This morning Eleanor revived, took some nourishment, and Ethel left her for half an hour, to get some fresh air. I walked out with her, and during that time gained her permission to use my own discretion as to any explanation with Edward. I might show him her father's letter, which would give him at once a full view of the causes of all that had occurred; but Ethel greatly feared its effect upon him; the painful story of his mother's sufferings, and his father's conduct, and his own birth—all which her father wished to spare him the knowledge of. "Trust me, Ethel," I urged, "he is able to bear it all. Let us have no more concealments, and prevarications—let all be open as daylight, let everything be clear and pure as your own heart, and God will bless the means we take to heal these wounds."

She pressed my hand, looked her acquiescence, and went in again to Eleanor.

I went in too, took out Mr. Beauchamp's letter, which I had always carried with me in my letter-case, folded it up within an envelope, and laid it myself on the table in his dressing-room.

An hour afterwards, Ethel and I were in the sitting-room together, and he came in, with the letter in his hand. He did not seem to notice me; he went up to Ethel, regarded her earnestly, then knelt down at her feet, and with his head bent down, and his hands raised, he cried, "Forgive me, Ethel, my sister, forgive me!" "Oh, not thus, not thus, Edward! Rise from your knees—not thus to me!" "It becomes me," he persisted, "it becomes me, faithless, perverse as I have been—humbled as I am—it becomes me to kneel—say only that you forgive me." "I do, I do," she exclaimed, "and may God forgive and bless you!" She kissed his brow, and he sprang to his feet. "Not you alone, dear Edward, we have all been to blame. Sit down by me, and let us speak calmly." "Only one question, Ethel," he said, "and then no more—then I will tire your ear no more with my prayers—only one question has been burning in my heart, on my lips, for years. Ethel! did you ever love me, as I loved you?" She did not instantly reply; she passed her hand over her brow, her lips quivered; but the tone of her voice was firm, as she replied, "I loved you always, but there were moments, ere we parted, when I felt that to become your wife would have been my highest happiness. In these feelings I was unfaithful to my father's will, to my own promise; and by a steady and continued struggle I was enabled to overcome them. I will not say that I did not suffer, but it resulted in peace, in more than peace—in happiness and new affections; and my first and only fresh pain was to see that you were not governed by the same duty of self-command and patience. Believe me, that in this I lost nothing of real affection for you, anxiety for your welfare, and desire to see you happy. I have loved you and prayed for you as my brother, and as such you are most dear to me." "I am answered," he replied, with a deep-drawn sigh. "Why did I not know of this letter before? Why should he, and you, have feared to trust me? And with regard to its conditions, it seems to me that it was a blind adherence to a promise extorted from him, or rather to a command given him, by one who, under the pressure of those sad circumstances, scarce knew what she uttered, that impelled your father to act as he did, and demand that vow from you." "We will not speak of that now, Edward. Let me believe that all that has been painful in our late intercourse is at an end; that we may be to each other what we were in the innocent days of our early youth." "Ethel," he said, "you shall be my guide, my guardian angel. You have opened my eyes to behold once more Virtue and Peace—peace not yet—but peace to be won. You say you pray for me—pray for me still, and most earnestly, that I may not turn again to my madness and folly. Oh, Ethel! let your spirit walk beside me on the way of life, and I shall be upheld; pure and holy being as thou art, make me like thyself!" With deep reverence, he bent before her, and would have knelt again, but she, now overwhelmed with mingled feelings, rushed to his bosom—the love of early youth, pure, passionless, yet fond, the sister's love, filled her heart—once more they were in the dell among the flowers—once more they were the world to each other—once more they mingled their tears—once more the inmost soul of each was known to the other.

From that moment, I felt that Edward was a new man. I went up, put my hand on the head of each, and blessed them.

"Now," said Ethel, "let us go to Eleanor." "Yes," he said, "let me, if she is only able—which may God grant!—let me make my peace with her." That minute came a tap at the door; a message from Eleanor to ask us to go to her; that she felt better. Ethel went first, and we followed. She was raised up on her couch, and held Ethel's hand.—"Come close to me, Edward—and, dear, good Mr. Hamilton; let me speak to you all, while I can; let me thank you for your goodness to me." She looked up timidly and beseechingly to Edward, and he sat down beside her. "I could die in peace, if I thought"——her poor weak frame and broken spirit could not sustain the expression of her heart in language; she paused, and covered her face with her handkerchief. "Eleanor—my wife," cried Edward; "live, for my sake; oh, look up, and live, that I may repair the injury I have done—for my sake, Eleanor, dear Eleanor!" At the tone of his voice, she withdrew her hand from her eyes, and looked up at him, incredulous, wondering,—then raised herself by a sudden effort, clasped her hands; joy, thankfulness, hope, bliss, flashed into her eyes, beamed on her brow; it was a change like that which must burst upon the

ransomed spirit when it wakes in Paradise. "Let me live, oh God!" and with the supplication she sank down again upon her pillow. I feared it was too much for her, and prepared a restorative. "She is gone," he exclaimed, in terror. "No," said Ethel, "be still—wait. This shall be her best medicine; there is colour on her lips." She opened her eyes, and gazed upon them, and on me. "Peace," she murmured—"peace at last!" Edward took her hand, and held it in both his. "Eleanor, unworthy as I am, I would ask your forgiveness. She has forgiven me; she, henceforth my beloved sister—will not you, my wife?" "Oh yes," she said, "let us all forgive each other. I have been bold, presumptuous, wayward, unjust. I have need, too, to ask forgiveness, from Heaven, and from you." He raised her hand to his lips, and his penitent tears fell upon it. "Let all be peace, henceforth," I said, "and pure affection; take your old friend's blessing, and may God bless and keep you all!" I drew Edward away, and left her alone with Ethel. Ethel told me, afterwards, that when they were alone, though almost too weak and exhausted to speak, or listen, she besought her to explain what had wrought this blessed change; she was lost in sudden joy and wonder, almost too great to bear. Ethel, as shortly and gently as possible, revealed all that was necessary to satisfy her; but, almost before she concluded, Eleanor, quite exhausted, sank into the same fainting state, became again insensible, and has continued so up to this moment; a much longer space of time than before. We are in much anxiety about her. Ethel and I watched by her; Edward appeared so completely overcome, and wearied out by the excitement of the day, that I persuaded him to go to his own room. I have not seen him since, and hope he has slept. I am now going to take some rest myself, and shall conclude this letter for the post this evening, when I fervently hope, though hope seems almost vain, for a change for the better in our invalid.

5 o'clock, evening of the 10th.—Truly the ways of the Lord are wonderful, and his thoughts not as our thoughts. Truly "man cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he vanisheth away like a shadow!" But it has pleased God that Eleanor should not die. Her insensibility at last became a soft sweet sleep. She awoke refreshed and strengthened, her pulse calmer, her hand cooler, and the physician marvelled; to us it was all explained. Edward had not returned to the room during the night, and in the morning Eleanor asked for him. Ethel came to me, to beg I would let Edward know; so I went to his room, and knocked at the door, but did not wait for an answer, and went in immediately. He was lying on the bed, with his clothes on, just as we had parted last night. I put my hand on his arm, and called him; his face was turned down upon the pillow, his long disordered dark hair all about it—one hand was on his side, the other grasped the bed-clothes. "My dear boy!" I cried, alarmed; no motion, no breath! I raised his head; stiff—cold—dead! Oh, my boy! my poor, dear, broken-hearted boy! is it come to this? I felt his pulse; it had ceased to beat for ever, in the wasted bony wrist. I bared his breast—the heart was still; it was all over. Horrified—awe-struck, I was on the point of losing my presence of mind; my hand was on the bell, the cry of alarm upon my lips—but the thought of Eleanor, of Ethel, arrested me. I hurried down, sent off for the physician, told Ethel he was very ill, and begged her to break that intelligence to Eleanor. But it is useless going on to give you further details—and my heart is sick, and I cannot write more. Ethel knows all; Eleanor not yet. This has quite upset me. But God's will be done! He knows best. This new trial was doubtless required in his great purposes, for our good.

LXI.

The Same.

Rome, May 13th.

Last night Sir Charles Herbert arrived, little prepared for the distressing intelligence that awaited him. I met him alone, and he saw, at once, that something was very much amiss. His first word, while my hand was yet in his, was, Ethel? "She is well," I replied. I took up in my arms the dear child, who now, escaping from her nurse, ran up to me full of glee; what a contrast was her beautiful sunny face to the sad ones around me. It was like a star in our night. I carried her in, and Sir Charles followed me. "Eleanor," he said, "is she gone?" "No, she lives, but it has pleased God, by an awful stroke, to put an end to our long anxieties for Edward, and to his troubles; he is taken from us—he is dead." Never shall I forget the look he cast upon me; the unutterable pain—the shock of sorrow. He sat down, overpowered. "Dead! may God forgive our share in his misery!"

Bitter, very bitter to his generous heart must have been the emotion of that moment. I hastened to soften the blow, and related to him all I have already described to you. "Between him and Ethel," I said, "there was at last perfect confidence, and a mutual forgiveness; and, I rejoice to think that, in their last embrace, she was permitted to give expression to the pure warm impulse of her heart, and prove to him that the past was not forgotten; and that her love for him, though changed in its nature, was the same as ever in its fidelity and strength. This must have been to him an inexpressible consolation." "I trust it was," he answered, deeply moved. "I can never be sufficiently thankful that I urged her coming." And, after a pause, he added: "No dispensation ought to seem to us, who have faith in God, strange or mysterious; yet the question will ask itself, and cannot be answered—Why am I, unworthy as I am, blessed with that gift, the vain desire for which has cost him his life? Oh, that he could have known how earnestly"—— I interrupted him. "We may not inquire into these things; we see through a glass darkly. We 'know not now, but we shall know hereafter.' Let us be content." "You are right," was all he said. And then I went to tell Ethel of his arrival. He only saw her for a few minutes that night, and their meeting was such as you may imagine—one of silent sorrow on both sides; feelings not to be described, in which pain must have preponderated, so as to outweigh, at first, any sources of comfort.

14th.—Little, my dear sister, did I ever imagine that I should be called upon to be a partaker in sorrows like these, to minister consolation where it once seemed to me that youth, and health, and love, and joy, had fenced round every avenue to pain—where hope was once so bright and bold, power so confident in itself, life so altogether full of blissful promise! What a storm has swept over us! Yet there is at least one who has stood the blast, and now is strengthened for the calm—the dead awful calm that follows it. Sorrowful, but not without hope—cast down, but not in despair—Ethel, truly our accompanying angel, is serene and firm. We have had a time of sad distress with Eleanor since I wrote to you—our poor wretched Eleanor. She soon became alarmed when she could not see her husband, nor hear any definite explanation of the cause. She insisted on going to him, besought us to carry her to his side, and, with the natural impetuosity of her feelings, now newly awakened, so overwhelmed us by her entreaties and anxiety, that we were forced to reveal the whole to her. My fear in doing so was very great; and I thought she could not have survived it. Her grief, her agony, I will not describe. She wrung her hands, and cried aloud—heaped upon herself reproaches, even execrations—lifted up her feeble shaking hands, as if craving help and pardon, and, with a shriek that rent our hearts, sank back once more into the same state of insensibility from which she had revived so lately to hope and new life.

It was a comfort to me that Sir Charles arrived in time to be my companion in the sad duties of yesterday. Edward is laid in the beautiful English cemetery I may have told you of before. "He died," says the physician, "of disease of the heart, which had probably been of some years' standing. The fatal crisis must have been brought on by agitation, or over-excitement."

I found, on the table in his room, that morning, Mr. Beauchamp's letter, and one begun to me, but only thus much written; "I beg you to preserve for me, my dear Mr. Hamilton," —— there he seemed to have broken off; but on the paper lay a miniature of Ethel, attached to an old faded ribbon, as if he had worn it round his neck. It was Ethel when a child, such as I well remember her—a lovely, laughing, blooming child, flowers in her hands, blue sky around her head, and the little white frock waving back, as if in a soft wind. As I took it up, my finger touched a spring, the back of the case flew open, and I saw a small paper folded, lying within. I felt it too sacred to open then. I closed the case, and read on the outside, *Ethel Beauchamp, aged six years, given to me, her cousin, on her fifteenth birthday.* I wrapped it in the letter he had begun, nothing doubting that, in the earnestness and sincerity of his new resolutions, he had intended parting with, for a time, this much-loved long-worn treasure. It was not with a painful sorrow that I placed it in my breast; for I felt that he who was gone, tempted, tried, erring as he was, had firmly purposed to redeem the past—was penitent, pardoned, and at peace.

15th.—At last our dear Eleanor permits us to offer her what comfort we can; the very in-

tensity of her anguish wears itself out, quietness succeeds to these paroxysms of grief, and during this time, Ethel, with ever-watchful care and skill, gives nourishment to her poor frame, and consolation to her heart, sometimes in words, sometimes only by sympathizing silence, and is rewarded by half-uttered thanks, and more tranquil tears. The physicians assure us that she has certainly gained strength the last two days, and that her recovery, with constant care, is likely to go on. We are very anxious she should be well enough to leave here before the very hot weather sets in. Ethel is in some degree released from her very close attendance on Eleanor, and goes out a little with Sir Charles every day.

16th.—This afternoon Eleanor sat up a little, and had the window of her room open. She cried very much when she first looked out, and saw the beautiful fresh summer, and felt the sweet air; but she made an effort which I was glad to see, and controlled herself; and by and by she turned to me with the faded light of her old smile flitting over her face, and said, "I told you I had a good constitution." It was so like poor Eleanor! I have felt sure ever since that she is getting better.

Soon I hope to embrace you once more. Do not write again here after receiving this.

LXII.

The Same.

Longbrooke, August 10th.

I address you, my dearest sister, once again from *home*,—for such indeed I may call this dear place, where we arrived yesterday. Eleanor, as I have already told you, has borne the journey better even than we could have hoped. She returns, changed indeed in person and in mind, with loss of a certain beauty, and loss of her laughing gaiety of spirit, but still retaining much of her old self; still there is now and then, though fleeting, the sudden light in the dark eye, the pretty curl of the chiselled lip, an evanescent sparkle on the arched brow, a lifting up of the proud once-animated head, but only for an instant, as if pleasure just glanced out, and was chased away by the ever-present memory of pain. But time will change Eleanor again; I do not mean that she will ever be what she was,—if she is a less happy, she is a better woman, and a steadier cheerfulness, a softer nature, will grow up out of her present state. She has learned by bitter trial to seek peace at its true source.

We came straight to Longbrooke to bring Eleanor home; her father was waiting to receive her, and I staid too and took up my old quarters. After spending an hour or two with us, Sir Charles and Ethel went home to Buckstead. Eleanor drooped sadly the last part of our journey yesterday, and gave way to an agony of tears as we entered the gate of Longbrooke; but this morning she is better.

There is great joy among the people at Ethel's return. Of her I need not write. You know all I would say. No praise of mine can praise her, yet could I write without end about her. It was only for a few minutes, as we drove up the avenue, and caught sight of the house, her old home, that she turned away, and I saw a few quiet tears steal down her face. The sun was setting, the swallows sweeping through the air, the flowers blooming, all as if she had but left it yesterday. I took her hand in mine, and she met my look of kindness with a smile—I have called her an angel too often—yet it was such only as I can imagine angels to wear—the smile of an angel, or my Ethel!

* * * * * * *

LXIII.

From Mr. Hamilton to Lilian Herbert, many years after the foregoing, on the eve of her marriage.

Buckstead.

My Dearest Child,—With your mother's permission I enclose a packet of letters, which I am sure you will be interested in reading, and the perusal of which may, I hope, be attended with instructive lessons.

In them you will find the history of your mother's early life, some part of your dear father's, your aunt Eleanor's and uncle Edward's; that kind uncle Edward, whom you have been taught, if you cannot remember, to think of with affection.

You have been always very happy, my dear child. Sorrow has never yet dimmed your eye, and I humbly pray that you may long be spared its visitations. You are on the point of union with your own heart's choice, blest by the approbation and heartfelt sympathy of all you love. The life that is before you shines with alluring promise. That it may be all fulfilled, is my earnest hope; and it is my great comfort and happiness to believe that you deserve, as far as mortal may be said to deserve, all the blessings a gracious

Providence is pleased to send. You have not been educated in a school of mere pleasure, luxury, or false refinement; "the voice of joy and praise has been in the dwelling of the righteous;" happiness has been made to you a source of improvement, through humility and gratitude, and the steady performance of duty in the midst of the many temptations ever attending a continued course of prosperity and enjoyment. Your parents have taught you the wholesome lessons of patience, fortitude, and self-command; and you are reaping the inestimable benefit of these in your character now, in well-regulated affections, energetic power, health of mind and body, a firm religious faith, and a delightful cheerfulness. I have, therefore, no fear, in putting these letters into your hands, that the perusal of them can injure in any way this good work.

These are the lessons I wish you to draw from them :—First and chiefly, that the greatest sustainer of peace, and producer of happiness, is Duty. You will see this in your mother's life; you will add to it all you have since known and felt of her great excellence, and you will then be convinced that through stern endurance, and performance of difficult duty, the very tenderest and most subtle feelings of the heart may live. The exquisite gentleness and loveliness of her present character will show you this.

In contemplating this portion of your father's life, you will revere his noble character more and more, and delight in the thoughts of his goodness and affection.

In your aunt Eleanor's early career, you will be warned of the danger of too great self-dependence, the thoughtless pursuance of a wilful unrestrained affection, and the consequent pain of conviction and remorse. From your knowledge of her present character, you will be able to add to her story, that the early severe chastening she endured has not been unproductive of a blessed result.

In your uncle Edward, you will see that error, the very opposite of your mother's virtue; that want of self-command, and of unswerving principle, without which no one can be great and good. And I beseech you to remember in this, what you have long been taught, that it is in the power of every human being God brings into life to act aright. With a firm resolution, and help from above, we can do all things. There is no necessary unhappiness in life; I mean as far as regards our own character and dispositions. A good man need never be unhappy. That "glorious liberty," spoken of in Scripture, "the glorious liberty of the children of God," is freedom from the yoke of sin and passion, and every man has within himself wherewith to attain to this liberty, this happiness.

It does not follow that, because we are called upon to endure great sorrow or temptation, our trust in God should be in the least shaken, our moral and religious principle in the least infringed; on the contrary, faith must be firmer, and principle more than ever uncompromising.

I do not say, that in this instance there was not sore trial, and great provocation to the indulgence of a reckless absorbing passion. It was so, alas!—and, from this, I would point out to you the last but not the least important lesson. He did receive injustice at our hands. We were all to blame, even your dear mother, in following any reserve or concealment. It would have disobeyed no absolute command of her father's, and would have been quite compatible with right feeling and delicacy to have revealed, much sooner than we did, what your uncle Edward afterwards learnt from his letter. But you will perceive your mother's motives for persevering so long in an opposite course.

One word for myself, and I have done. I have to beg pardon of all, for my imperfect performance of the serious duties I was called on to perform. Your dear mother's partial affection for me has blinded her to my faults and shortcomings, of which I myself am humbly conscious. But it is the crowning happiness of this, the late evening of my days, to believe that I was in any measure enabled to support and comfort her, and others who were dear to her. I am afraid you will often find my letters very prosy and tiresome, but this you must forgive.

And now, my beloved child, I have only to add, God bless you always! May your new home be as rich in blessings as the one you are quitting; may the memory of it be as sweet incense shed over your future path; may you prove yourself, as hitherto, worthy of a happy lot; and may he, the new guardian and companion of your life, be truly such! God bless you both, prays your affectionate old friend,

R. C. Hamilton.

CORNELIA.

CHAPTER I.

"A little child, a limber elf,
Singing, dancing to itself,
A fairy thing with round red cheeks,
That always finds and never seeks."
Coleridge.

One evening in autumn, at Pau, in the Pyrenees, and in one of the houses usually occupied by the English residents there, four persons, composing what we should call, in England, a family group, sat listlessly watching the twilight deepen into night. A lady, still beautiful, but with lines of premature age on her brow, and soft hair streaked with grey, leaned her arms upon a little table by the window, and gazed up to the darkening sky, where the stars were just appearing. Every now and then she suddenly turned, with an air of anxiety, to watch the movements of a little child, a girl, who was creeping on the floor after a ball, laughing to itself, and exploring every corner, under chairs and tables. In one of these corners, apart, sat a boy of perhaps fifteen years old, his hands resting on his knees, his eyes fixed first on his mother by the window, (with an expression difficult to describe, for it was something in which pity, admiration, and grief were mingled,) then turned upon his father, who was sitting over a fire newly kindled, and crouching over it with a starved uncomfortable look. The gaze which the boy fixed upon him was terrible; all the softness in his eyes when he looked on his mother fled; yet there came no flash of anger, but a steady dull look of hatred and contempt; an unutterable scorn; a defiance, not wild, revengeful or sudden, but fixed, even to solemnity. The lips were pressed together, the nostrils expanded as with deep-drawn breath; the hands, though apparently resting on the knees, clasped them tightly, with an action of determination and power. And all was quite silent, save now and then the crowing laugh of the little child. The father sat over the fire; as if in contrast with the demeanour of the son, his attitude was that of careless relaxation; he gazed vacantly on the kindling flame, and addressed neither look nor word to those around him.

He was near fifty years of age, tall, full in figure, powerful and handsome—so you would say at the first glance; the forms were those of beauty, the expression was that of the mind and heart within. He had that day given way to one of those violent fits of passion common with him, and fearful to behold. Traces of the storm that had swept over the surface were visible to familiar eyes; the air of weariness, the restless glance, the look of troubled indolence.

Suddenly the little child knocked its head, and screamed aloud. He turned angrily, and said in a loud voice, "Be quiet!"

The mother started up, but the boy was already on his knees beside the child, soothing her in the softest manner. The lady resumed her seat, and her air of abstraction.

"Come with me," said the boy to his sister.

"No, no;" and she ran after her ball again.

He returned to his seat, and all was as quiet as before.

But soon the unwary child was at fault again; though some instinctive feeling seemed to keep her from approaching her father, she crept to the other end of the fireplace, and put her hand, to steady herself in rising, upon one of the heated fire irons. She screamed again, louder than before, but more piercingly rose the mother's shriek, as she saw the father's powerful arm, with returning passion, seize the child—seize, strike it, and dash it down again upon the floor with brutal violence;—there it lay—it screamed no more—a moment of awful stillness; then the mother, shrieking, "He has killed her," gathered her child to her bosom, and rushed from the room. She was followed by the boy—he had not stirred from his seat, but his eye had flashed, and his hand was clenched. He followed her to her bedroom, where she had laid the child down, and bathed its head with cold water. It was only stunned, and, reviving, cried again.

"Mother!" said the boy.

She started, not knowing he had followed.

"What?"

"I curse him for a murderer!"

She shuddered. "Hush! hush! oh my son! May God forgive us all!"

"Forgive us all! what have you done—

what have I done—what has this baby done? What do you talk about being forgiven for?"

She made no answer.

"I don't understand it," he said doggedly. "I have heard that God is good, but I don't believe it."

Still she replied not, except by a deep sigh, or rather groan, and she sunk on a chair beside the bed. He stood gazing on her.

By a strong effort she roused herself, and said calmly, "Don't talk now. Leave me. You know we are going away to-morrow. Let Wilson have all your things to pack."

He did not hear her last words. He ran down stairs, out of the house, into the open air, and they did not see him again that night.

The mother put on her cloak and bonnet; again took her child to her bosom, and she, too, left the house.

A different scene in a humble dwelling had passed that day. A respectable artisan, Jean Moranne, and his wife, had lost, the week before, their only child. That morning Jean had left the house comforted, after a long talk with his poor wife. She said she was better, and that she thought she should have strength to put by the little clothes and playthings, the sight of which was a daily and hourly harrowing of her grief. When he came back to his dinner it was not ready. He waited some time, and then went upstairs to their room.

There sat poor Cecile, a little shoe in her hand, a pretty blue bonnet on her knee, looking at them with dry eyes, and a bitter heart-broken ghost of a smile on her pale lips.

"Nay, nay," said her husband, gently taking them from her, "this won't do, my Cecile."

She burst into tears, threw her arms about his neck, and sobbed bitterly. He comforted her as the father of the beloved lost child alone could comfort; and then he himself quietly and tenderly put away those precious relics; with many tears he did it; with many tears he prayed for her affliction, that God would heal it, and then bidding her, with gentle authority, "Come and eat," this good man, simple, calm, and earnest, led his sorrowing companion from the sad thoughts of the past, to the cares of the present.

They were sitting quietly together, more cheerful, in the evening, when a knock at the door was succeeded by the entrance of the lady we have described, with her child under her cloak. She was very pale and in evident agitation, and she sat down as if exhausted, when she came in. To their anxious inquiry she answered that she was well.

"Excuse me, Jean and Cecile," she continued, "for intruding on you at this time. You were so kind to me, Cecile, when this child was ill, and she took a fancy to you; I know you are a kind and affectionate nurse"—(the ready tears sprang to the poor woman's eyes). "We are leaving here to-morrow for six months, and I want to know if you will take charge of her till my return?"

"What do you say, Cecile?" said Jean, his face brightening.

It is only necessary to say that they consented, that the lady left a very liberal supply of money, far more than they wished to take, and the poor infant was committed to the tenderest care that hearts bereaved could lavish upon her.

Next morning, very early, her parents and her brother left Pau.

"I will tell you what, Cecile," said Jean, a few days after, "there is something wrong, some way or other, about these people. The mother, to be sure, seemed very fond of this child,—(what a pretty pet it is, Cecile!)—but Monsieur never could bear the sight of it, poor thing! By the by, what is its name?"

"I declare," cried Cecile, smiling quite pleasantly, at which her husband's heart glowed, "I declare I don't know! Missy, Baby, was always its name."

"Well," replied Jean, "that will do for the present; we will inquire. But I was going to say, they were very odd people, Cecile."

"You said so, Jean."

"I have been thinking it is very possible we may never hear anything of them again."

"That will be strange indeed;—poor thing!" replied Cecile, musingly.

"And I was going to propose—you see, here," shaking the purse, and unfolding bank notes, "we have a great deal of money, Cecile. She will want it all, if they have deserted her, God knows. We have enough—we had enough to keep our own darling, and why shouldn't we keep her, wife, and save this till we see what turns out? If they come back, well and good; we will take pay out of it. If they don't—why then she may want it, and so——"

"And so I see all your goodness, and your dear kind heart, Jean,—my good Jean!—and it shall be so. God has sent her, perhaps, to be a comfort to us; let us take it."

The six months passed away. The child was happy, and they doated on her. She was now two years old. They quite dreaded the time when she would probably be taken from them; and when, a few weeks afterwards, a letter came to their hands, the contents of which they guessed, Jean passed it to Cecile in silence, and Cecile back to Jean, and both studied the exterior long, apparently unwilling to know the contents. But it was no summons; it was merely stating that the child would be entrusted to them some months longer, and referring them to a source whence money would be paid, and letters forwarded. Cecile sighed a load of anticipated regret off her heart, and Jean smiled.

A few months later, and disease and death were in the dwelling of Jean Moranne. The fearful cholera stalked abroad though the land, and breathed its pestilential breath around them. Cecile trembled; and as acquaintance and then friend vanished from their sight, and the mortality grew terrible. she besought him to fly from the place,—to save, if not themselves, their precious charge. Jean said he was not afraid; he endeavoured to cheer and support Cecile; he would not go. "No," he said, "they must stand and wait the will of God. But to-morrow he would write to her parents." To-morrow never came for him; that night, the close of a sultry summer's day, as he sat by the window, with Cecile beside him, and the little one playing at their feet, he shivered, and grew faint; rising, he put his hand on the arm of his wife, and leaned heavily. She started, and looked into his face.

"Jean, you are cold!—you are—oh, God! you are ill!"

He tottered to his bed, and sunk down. No one came near Cecile that night but the doctor; she watched her beloved Jean die; it was more than she could bear, and she sickened too. The doctor seeing her case as hopeless as her poor husband's had been, left her to attend others. The little maid who had tended the child ran away, frightened; and no one but the good Curé entered the house of death. Happily, he came ere poor Cecile's fast-approaching insensibility had rendered her incapable of speech. Seeing him enter, she eagerly beckoned him to her side, and uttered a few faint words.

"The child—her money—take—oh, take care of her!" and she pointed to a drawer with the key in the lock.

"Where is the child?" he asked.

She shook her head, her lips moved, but the sound was inarticulate.

The Curé was only on temporary duty in that place, and knew nothing of the people. He went down and looked about; all was still in the house, still as the death-chamber where lay the clay-cold bodies of those whose hearts had lately beat so warm and true. He heard no voices of children, no cry; he thought the poor woman had spoken in delirium; he looked into another bed-room—no one was there. He was leaving the house, when it occurred to him to close the window of the little sitting-room down stairs, and to draw the blind. There, on a little bed, which had evidently been made up in haste, on two chairs, lay the sweet child, sleeping; no sickness on its rounded cheek, no chill on its soft warm limbs. He ran back to the upper room, and took out of the drawer a heap of baby's clothes, and from the corner of the same, tied up and sealed, a packet, which was the money Cecile had spoken of. On second thought, he threw back the clothes, and only carried the money away. Then, returning to the child, he looked on her a few moments, undecided what to do. His impulse was to carry her away at once,—he was a man of quick impulse and warm heart,—but where should he take her? Not to the hospital—she was not sick; not to any house that was hitherto unvisited by the pestilence—there she would not be received. He went out, and endeavoured to find some one who would shelter, for a time, this lonely little creature, but in vain. Some said that Jean and Cecile had been imposed upon, and induced to take a stranger, no one knew how, or why. Another declared it would bring ill-luck. All were in the greatest anxiety about themselves and their families. Many were in sorrow and desolation; and many hearts that might have been kind had ceased to beat. The Curé went back to the house again, and found the child sitting up on her bed, playing with an old doll. She looked surprised when he came in, and gazed about for Cecile; but she did not seem frightened, till he lifted her in his arms, and carried her out of the house; then she began to cry, and the doll dropped from her arms. He picked it up, and put it in his pocket for her, and tried to coax her, in which he succeeded till they reached his house. He lived with a twin sister, who was devotedly attached to him. She was an excellent creature, a sister of charity in the highest sense, full of love to God and man. She was going about calmly and fearlessly

among the sick; her body inured to exertion, her heart strong as it was tender, her mind reflective and active too. To this sister he delivered the little girl, the nameless, friendless, beautiful child. Few questions were asked; they were enough for Miss D'Albert; she took her in her arms, and smiled pityingly, as the wide-open wondering eyes seemed to search for some familiar face. "Mama Cecile, Mama Cecile!" were the only words she spoke; crying bitterly, she refused to be comforted; and even sleep, the baby's universal balm, failed to soothe her. The old woman in whose care she was left when Miss D'Albert went out tried to nurse her, but it was rough nursing, after poor Cecile's; the child screamed and kicked with healthy lusty life, and succeeded in escaping to a corner by itself, to moan and weep.

Death tracked the infant's footsteps. In another week, her benefactor lay dead in the arms of his sorrowing sister. The new Curé was immediately appointed in his place; and she left, carrying with her the child, whom no one owned—and no one, to whom she could conscientiously entrust it, would take.

Miss D'Albert was not naturally very fond of children; she had not the strong maternal yearning of Cecile, nor much of that instinctive love of infancy common to women. But there was much to interest her for this child—much that touched her kind heart, and her warmest affections. She had been rescued and protected by her beloved brother—left, as it were, a bequest from him. In the hurry and anxiety of their occupations, no conversation had passed between them, as to the course to be pursued in the matter, and the child was, meantime, becoming reconciled to its new abode—smiling and playing in beauty and health, day after day, before them. They had each of them thought about it, and each delayed to a less engaged and anxious moment any further arrangement. Ere this time came, Miss D'Albert was left sadly and suddenly almost alone in the world. She was poor, but not destitute; she could afford to keep the little one, and she took it to her bosom, to share such a home as she could provide; happy was it that a heart of so much kindness, a soul of so much piety and elevation, had been moved to do so! Her speedy removal from Pau, and the state of the place at the time, hurried her, perhaps, to this decision; she believed that the people of the house of whom her brother spoke, Jean and his fond Cecile, were really the parents; she therefore made no further inquiry, and left no trace of her movements.

One thing seemed very strange, and it puzzled her. She had never heard the child's name. It talked to itself in a strange language of its own, but no name except that of Cecile was suggested; and to this it did not answer, only looked wonderingly about as before, and shook its little head. Miss D'Albert tried to find it out by using various names, but none were responded to; the pretty speaking face only gazed with more surprise into hers. Then a sudden thought struck her; she was pleased with the idea. Her brother's name was Cornelius; the child should be Cornelia.

Her greatest amusement was the little old doll which had been brought away with her on that eventful morning. About its bruised wooden neck was twisted a string of small beads, forming a rosary, to which hung a little cross, and a small cornelian heart, with the letters A. S. on the back; and in another part an old seal was dangling, on which was engraved the letter L. A small coin, and some bits of bright-coloured ribbon, added to the attractiveness of this plaything; it seemed to have been something old, and put aside—brought out merely for a child's amusement, and worth nothing; but Miss D'Albert laid it carefully by, folding it in a paper on which she wrote the day of Cornelia's coming, and the circumstances which brought her.

CHAPTER II.

"She was a phantom of delight,
When first she gleam'd upon my sight."
Wordsworth.

From Pau the bereaved sister removed to Florence. She intended to have gone to England, which was the country of her adoption, and where she lived for twenty-five years, till her brother summoned her to join him in their native country. But it so happened, that the eldest son of the sister with whom she lived in England had now settled as a merchant at Leghorn; and he was a favourite nephew, and pressed her to come and be near him. She tried Leghorn, but it did not agree with her health; so it ended in his taking a little house in Florence, where he joined them on a Saturday, leaving on Monday morning, and sometimes spending a day in the course of the week with them. Miss D'Albert carried with her the precious little Cornelia, and the old woman who had been her brother's servant, the faithful Nanette.

Her nephew, William Daymer, was a person of very pleasing frank manners, sincere and upright mind, cheerful temper, and most tender heart. A strong affection existed between him and Miss D'Albert, and they went on very happily together. Cornelia soon imitated him in calling her "Aunt." "And then," said he, laughing, "you may as well call me Uncle, for I am old enough to be her brother."

But "Uncle" was inclined to spoil her sadly. He doated on her, brought her all sorts of pretty things to play with, and his weekly return was hailed with the utmost delight. Sometimes, to Miss D'Albert it was an unfortunate occurrence, for not seldom was Cornelia naughty, and no correction, however wholesome or desirable, was allowed to go on in Uncle Daymer's presence; no, he would rescue her from the corner in aunt's own room, would pop the sweetie between the pretty pouting lips, would carry her off long sunny walks, after the doom of being left by herself, shut up, had been pronounced; it was no use—no arguing against it, no protestations about "the child's own good" were of any avail; Uncle Daymer said she could not be good if she was not happy, and happy he would make her.

Uncle Daymer was quite right; the best thing they could do was to make her happy. But his way of doing it was not the most judicious. The result of it all was, that Cornelia was lively, generous, impetuous, and passionate; sometimes, too, rather obstinate; very affectionate, but not to be called docile. At the same time, as Uncle Daymer declared, "her pretty engaging ways were enough to melt anybody's heart."

The sun was shining brightly, one Saturday morning; Cornelia skipped about, talking of his coming.

"Come, and say your lesson, my dear; and, if you are good, I will take you to meet him, this evening."

No; Cornelia declined to say any lessons that morning. "It was just so yesterday," urged Miss D'Albert; "do come now, like a good girl."

"Try and catch me," she cried, dancing up, and then running away again—throwing back her dark curls, and looking the picture of playful defiance.

"This is not the time for playing, Cornelia."

"I'm not playing, though! I'm in earnest!"

"So am I."

"But you don't try to catch me! there—there!" and she came so near as to touch her aunt's knee.

"What d'ye say to that?"

"I say you are a very naughty girl!"

"Well, aunt," and she came up coaxingly, "I won't say my lessons now; but, if you like, I will say them after dinner, before we go out to meet uncle."

"Well, then, if you will promise, that will do."

So the point was unwisely yielded, and away went Miss Cornelia, at high romps with the old dog. And Miss D'Albert went out to visit some poor people.

When afternoon came:—

"Now, Cornelia, you remember!"

"Ah; how soon! I have not finished my chestnuts."

"Leave them, and come here directly; bring your book, and your writing."

A peculiar glance was shot from Cornelia's eyes. It was a challenge—Miss D'Albert knew it well. Hoping to evade it, she took no notice.

Cornelia finished her chestnuts.

"Now, my dear."

Again, the little orbs kindled, and flashed. "Oh, no, not now, aunty, I can't, indeed."

"What will Uncle Daymer say?"

"Oh, he 'll love me all the same; he says, Nelly is always good. *His* Nelly is; and I am his Nelly; I will be good for him on a Saturday; I cannot be good for you every day, aunty."

"Oh, Cornelia! you are a sad child. And this is Saturday too, and yet you are so naughty!"

"Wait till he comes."

"I shall wait no longer. If you will not obey, you must be punished.

Nanette was summoned. Miss D'Albert knew it was vain to accept the challenge without securing a second.

"We must take her up stairs, Nanette."

And now commenced the warfare; the struggling, kicking, and screaming. At last, the two, almost breathless, landed her in prison, a corner of Miss D'Albert's room, enclosed by the high fender. When once conquered, and placed there, Cornelia never offered further opposition. She was too proud to attempt to come out; and she crouched down sullenly, with her face turned to the wall.

"Let her be, Nanette." Nanette was vainly trying to bring her to reason.

Miss D'Albert sat down by the window, and took her work. The silence was broken, now and then, by a suppressed sob from the corner. Each sob went to the tender woman's heart. She got up repeatedly, and besought the little girl to be good, and she should be released; but sullen refusal was all she met with. At last, earlier than usual, a step was heard on the stair. They knew it well.

"Uncle!" Cornelia shouted, triumphantly, starting up from her seat on the floor.

"Where are you, my darling?" was the reply.

The door opened; a hot crimson flush flew over Cornelia's face, and she did not speak.

"My dear William, you are early," said his aunt.

"Just in time to beg pardon for her, I see," cried Uncle Daymer, blythely, glancing at the corner.

"But she has been naughty, very. I cannot forgive her yet, till she promises to be good."

"Promise, now, my Nelly; my own girl, be good!"

No answer.

"See!" he cried, holding up a little fantoccino doll he had brought; "look here."

"You must not bribe her, William," said the aunt.

"Now, now, Nelly, come, make haste," he said.

"Come here, then, Uncle Day!"

She put her arms round his neck and whispered.

"All right! all right!" he replied, lifting her out and covering her with kisses. She laughed joyously.

"We won't tell aunty,—oh no!" she cried.

"Yes, we will," he answered, laughing too. "She says, aunty, that she promises Uncle Daymer, but nobody else!"

Miss D'Albert sighed. But she was tired of telling William Daymer that he was spoiling the child,—"things must take their chance."

"Now, aunty," he said, "put on your bonnet, and we will have a walk this beautiful evening."

"Oh! yes, uncle. Let us go to the Cascina, and see the pretty carriages, and the English ladies aunty says are so nice; and we will sit under a beautiful large tree, and talk about England, where we are all going, you know, uncle—all of us!—you and everybody, thatis, you, and me, and aunty. Ah, que cela est beau!" she cried, clapping her hands, as they set out. Sometimes she talked to Miss D'Albert in French, sometimes snatches of Italian; but the twenty-five years in England, and her connection with English people, had made Miss D'Albert all but English herself, and it was as their native language.

As they went along, they met groups of gay pedestrians, enjoying, like themselves, the lovely refreshing summer evening. Cornelia bounded gaily along, all disgrace forgotten, all friendship restored; her eyes sparkled, her voice was the merriest of the merry; and often was an admiring glance from a passer-by turned again and again upon the pretty child, already old enough to enjoy admiration, and return smiles. Uncle Daymer was proud of her. As they wandered across the pleasant green turf in the Cascina, he lifted her on his shoulder, and called her his little queen; and she shook the flowers she had gathered over his head and coat.

They had sauntered a long time, and were going home. The dew was falling, and they walked quickly. Before them were two figures, proceeding slowly the same way—so slowly that they were almost overtaken, when William Daymer stopped suddenly.

"Susanne," he said to his aunt, "I do think that is my cousin, Mrs. George Daymer, and her son, Claud. They were coming to Pisa for her health. Let me see! If it is, the boy is very much grown—yes, it is!—how like his father when he turns his head—poor fellow!"

He quickened his pace again, and overtook them; and, advancing before Miss D'Albert and Cornelia, he kindly stopped and greeted them. The lady started, and her pale face suddenly flushed with the surprise. She was exceedingly delicate, and leaned, almost clinging, on the arm of her son, a tall boy, perhaps fourteen or fifteen years old.

"My cousins, I am sure," said William Daymer.

They recognised him, and shook hands.

"I had not expected to see you," he said; "but it cannot be a great surprise to you to see *me* here. Let me introduce you to my aunt, Miss D'Albert, and this, our little niece, or daughter, our Nelly. You seem tired, Mrs. Daymer," he added, in his gentle way. "Let us sit down and have a few minutes' chat here, on this seat. I want to know what brought you here, and how you are, and if I can be of any service to you."

The last time William Daymer was in England, he was introduced to this lady, the

widow of a cousin who died in India, and had come home to join her son. He had previously been sent home to school, and William had seen him before. They had been left in very straitened circumstancees; and Mrs. Daymer was about to form some plan for keeping a school, or finding some situation suitable to her powers and her position, when her health, which never was strong, gave way, and she was supposed to be dying. But she partially recovered; and a change of climate being recommended, her friends made up a purse to help her to go abroad. She came to Pisa, and was a little better; so they had undertaken this excursion to Florence for a week, during a gleam of hope, in better spirits; and this was one of the last evenings before their return to Pisa.

"Dr. Barton *does* think you better, mama, really better," said the boy, looking anxiously and tenderly at her. "You know you are getting well now."

"Much better, Claud, dear, especially to-day," she answered, cheerfully. "I am so glad we met you, Mr. Daymer. I wish something may bring you to Pisa; I am so much better there, that I must stay for the present. But it is very pleasant to see the faces of friends; such I may call you both, I am sure;" and she looked gratefully at Miss D'Albert's genial face, full of kind sympathy; "our intercourse must surely not begin and end here."

"Let us persuade you to spend another day or two here, and spend them with us," they said.

"To-morrow is Sunday, mother," put in Claud; "so to-night is not our very last."

It was agreed they should spend Sunday together.

"Good night! bonsoir!" was said.

"Bonsoir, bonsoir! felice notte!" cried Cornelia, starting off with a laugh and a bound.

Claud looked at her and smiled. She nodded to him. He still looked on her, but said nothing, till his mother observed her, and whispered, "How pretty the child is, Claud!"

Then he said, "I never saw anything like her before."

"They will walk much quicker than we shall," his mother said.

The same thought struck kind Uncle Daymer. "It is late," he said, "they must not walk home;" and, running on a little way, procured a carriage, while Miss D'Albert waited for the others.

"William says we must all go home in his coach."

Soon he came up, his face beaming with haste and kindness; "You must show us where you are lodging, and we will fetch you to-morrow," he said. "Now, Miss Nelly, you shall sit on my knee."

"Oh, come to mine," whispered Claud to her.

"No," she said; "you are a new boy, and I love my Uncle Daymer best. I am his Nelly, always on a Saturday."

Claud smiled again, but said no more. He seemed never tired of looking at her, as at a cheerful pleasant thing, the very sight of which is a joy.

"Good night, Nelly," he said to her, when they parted.

"I am nobody's Nelly but my uncle's. You must call me Cornelia; that is my name. Good night, Mr. Claud. We are not going to get out here. I like riding in a coach very much."

How Uncle Daymer laughed and kissed her!

They met next day at the English church; and seldom were more devout hearts lifted up in praise to God. Mrs. Daymer, whose strength seldom permitted her this indulgence, trembling as it were daily on the verge of the grave, rejoiced in spirit, and commended herself and her child in devout faith to the care of an everlasting father. Miss D'Albert, a real Protestant in principle, with a heart truly Catholic, worshipped in all sincerity and tranquil peace, and added to her prayer an earnest supplication for their suffering friend. William Daymer carried them all in his wide heart's love, and as he rose from prayer, and his eye fell on the pale widow and her boy, its brightness was dimmed with moisture, and his heart was glad in the consciousness of its kindness. His little Nelly stood beside him, sometimes stealing her hand into his, sometimes smiling up broadly into his face, and at last falling asleep on his shoulder, and resting there till it was time to go home. Uncle Daymer had very particular notions about going to church, and thought it was better his Nelly should go there to sleep, than not go at all; as if there was something holy in that rest, as if the air of the place blessed the child.

After their early dinner, William took the young ones a walk again, and Miss D'Albert stayed in with Mrs. Daymer.

During their conversation, she spoke often

and anxiously about her future prospects, and her son.

"As to my future," she said, "little of it is likely to be spent in this world. And that makes me more anxious for Claud. He, poor fellow, evidently shrinks from the idea, will not admit it at all, that my state of health is so perilous, and that any year, any month, or day, may find him an orphan. He is always hoping for the best."

"The right spirit," said Miss D'Albert.

"I doubt it," replied Mrs. Daymer; "our hope must be the fruit of faith; faith that acquiesces in all God's will, otherwise it is flimsy, unreal, delusive. I fear that my poor Claud's hope is indeed nothing more than his own fond wish—he wishes, and he hopes."

"In young minds that is natural," replied her friend; "I would scarcely wish it otherwise. You cannot expect them to experience that which is the fruition of a long-practised, firm, and unswerving principle. Faith which worketh by love, and hope resulting from that faith, are the blessed experiences of the highly spiritual, and often the tried, servants of God."

Mrs. Daymer bent her tearful eyes to the ground, and only said, "the trial will to him be all the greater when it comes."

There was a long pause; and then Miss D'Albert resumed in a kind and sympathising tone.

"He seems a most attentive and excellent son. There is much thoughtfulness about him, and yet he is very cheerful, and clever too, I imagine?"

"To tell you all he has been to me would lead me, I know, to say more to you than I ought about my own child. I can only say that he has been to me protector, son, companion, ay, even as a daughter, since my return. And his talents are excellent. His genius for music is something wonderful. I have allowed him a few lessons lately, and his progress has been very rapid. I almost fear the effect on his health, even on his mind, of the intense excitement which accompanies its cultivation. I have seen him tremble with ecstacy under the enjoyment of a fine service; I have seen tears on his cheek, and his hands tightly clasped together, as if his emotion could scarcely be controlled. At first I hesitated about encouraging this passion; but after long deliberation I decided that it would not be right to neglect it, and while I live I have the opportunity of seeing it rightly directed, and of watching its proper development."

"You are very wise," said Miss D'Albert, "and it must be a happiness to you to see him enjoy it so much."

"The lessons are expensive," continued Mrs. Daymer, "but we contrive to meet that by denying ourselves some little luxuries. He does not mind a shabby coat, if he can only turn to his music. And when I am pretty well I have a few pupils for English among my kind acquaintances at Pisa, which helps greatly. He was so well taught at school as to general knowledge, that with a few good books he and I are able to go on with a sort of learning perhaps more useful to him in after-life than any classical education would have been."

"I wish," said Miss D'Albert, "you could tell me how to make a good girl of this pet of ours, Cornelia. She is so wilful, and so spirited!"

"There is only one royal road to goodness and happiness," said Mrs. Daymer, "and that is obedience. Obedience is the great principle to inculcate in childhood and youth; and in maturer age it is elevated into faith, when God himself is the sole object of our obedience, and we see him as such."

"How much," exclaimed Miss D'Albert, "has your son to be thankful for, in his mother! I well understand his unwillingness to think you are an uncertain blessing!"

"Ah!" she replied, "he was early taken from me; at three years old he was sent to England, but even at that age he had learnt to obey us, and now I fondly think those little lessons have not been lost."

"If you were staying near us, I should rejoice to see Cornelia under your kind eye sometimes. Poor child! we try to do our best for her, but I confess she is altogether above my hand at times."

"How is she your niece?" inquired Mrs. Daymer; and this led to the recital of Nelly's little history. Ere it was quite concluded, the three returned, in high spirits, with hands full of flowers. They had been very happy, and the only regret was, that the friends must part on the morrow.

Mrs. Daymer and Claud were escorted home by the other three.

"Good-bye *Cornelia!*" said Claud gravely.

"Good night, Mr. Claud! Shall I see you any more?"

"I hope so, but I don't know," he answered, "Good-bye!"

When they reached home Mrs. Daymer was very tired; she lay down on the little hard sofa at the lodgings, and Claud fetched a pillow from the bed and put it under her head. She thanked him, and smiled, but he sat down beside her; his eyes filled with tears, and he turned his head away. "What are you thinking of, my dear?" said his mother; "you are as sorry as I am to leave our good kind friends."

"Yes—no—I am sorry, but it is not that, mother. I was thinking what a dull room, what a hard poor sofa for *you* to lie on—oh, mother! if I could only work for you, and earn something better! I could, but then I must leave you, and that I cannot do yet! oh, tell me how I can serve you best. I would work for you, mother, to the last shred of my strength, at any labour!"

He spoke fast and earnestly, and the tears rolled down his face. She looked at him fondly, at his eager kindling eye, his clasped hands, his wet cheeks. "My beloved Claud," she said, "you need not at present, at least, wish to do more. You have done for me more than I could have imagined it possible for so young a son to do for a mother—you have been, you are, everything to me. You make me happy. And will not this consciousness make you happy too?"

He answered with a gentle smile, kissed her forehead, smoothed her pillow, and then played to her an air of Mozart's, during which she rested quietly, and he lost himself in absorbing delight; all care for the moment forgotten, as he dwelt on the delicious harmonies, entering heart and soul into their every hidden sense. Music was to him a language, nay more, a conversation. It spoke to him, and he spoke again through it; its companionship was one of unfailing sympathy, a true fellowship of love.

Next day they returned to Pisa, and he resumed his lessons.

"If you take my advice, madam," said the master to Mrs. Daymer, "you will make music this boy's profession. I would stake a good deal on his career being a brilliant one—if he has health."

But Claud was not strong. His physical temperament was delicate and irritable, and already he suffered at times from over excitement. But to a mind of uncommon power was united in him a firmness of purpose and steadiness of principle, which promised well for the future, and often helped to calm his mother's anxiety when she feared the too great power of the spirit over the strength. He would pause at once when she warned him of over fatigue, and for her sake he spared his strength.

The friends did not meet again that year.

In the course of the following spring, William Daymer took his aunt and Cornelia to see them at Pisa.

Mrs. Daymer's health improved, and after another year she and her son returned to England.

CHAPTER III.

* * "Quench with their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep,
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep,
For he is gone where all things fair and wise
Descend:—oh dream not that the amorous deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death fends on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair." *Shelley.*

A FEW scenes from the home of each will sufficiently develop the progress of our story during the next ten or twelve years.

Miss D'Albert heard occasionally from Mrs. Daymer for two years after they parted, during which time she spoke of her health as still very weak, and of her son's progress and improvement in as glowing terms as ever. The last letter however received by Miss D'Albert told of failing strength. "Do not be surprised," it said, "if the time is long ere your hear from me again. We have been obliged to give up our few pupils, and I am now scarcely equal to the exertion of writing even these few words. Farewell."

It was a long farewell.

Claud stood by his mother's deathbed; the boy of sixteen, a man in mind and feeling—the devoted and beloved son, watching her, his only cherished earthly treasure, fading from his sight for ever. He stood there, in his face unutterable grief, in his heart deep sorrow, yet not without hope. He knew that she was even now at peace, that the clear air of a blessed eternity already fanned her brow, and its far-stretched prospect of light and beauty was opening on her spiritual sight. She blessed him too, she bade him take comfort in the consciousness of duty performed, affection sanctified, happiness for her, won, never to be lost. And he did take comfort; he held her hand, and calmly and gratefully listened to her words, those last holy and beloved words which would be written on his heart for ever!

Night drew on—and none disturbed the stillness of the chamber—the little girl who was their only servant, and a kind person

who had come in lately to help to nurse, were both lying down. All was still. It was an evening in May, and the air was warm, and Mrs. Daymer wished to have the window open. Claud rose and gently opened it, and one beautiful star shone clear and bright in the evening sky. Its ray was steady, and it seemed to whisper to Claud of hope and patience:—

"Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm, and self-possessed."

He gazed upwards a few moments, and returned to his mother's side refreshed. Her eyes were closed, but soon she opened them, and, seeing him, faintly smiled. He passed his arm under her pillow, with that gentleness which none learn so well as the loving by the sick-bed of the loved, and supported her dear head. There for nearly three hours bending over her, he watched her rest steal into sleep, and sleep into unconsciousness, till the fluttering breath and pulse, the cold damp hand, told him the end was near—near, near, very near—and now, come. Ere the brightness of the star waned in the sky, she was gone.

When William Daymer heard of his cousin's death, he wrote to Claud, offering him assistance and support, in the kindest manner. "I must work for my living as well as you," he said, "but I will help you, and we will lighten each other's toils." Claud wrote an answer full of gratitude, and regret that he could not accept the offered kindness; a half-brother of his mother's had taken him at once into his counting-house in London, and there he was fixed for many years to come. William Daymer was glad he was provided for; he wrote again kindly, telling him always to think of him and his sister as friends, and enclosing a cheque for a hundred pounds, to be applied by Claud to his own use in any way he most required. And often and often did Claud, in the dusty counting house, dream over days in Florence, days past—and perhaps to come—oh might it ever be!—and with these dreams mingled visionary strains—a melodious memory—music still precious to his soul, but whose reality was now seldom indulged in, almost a forbidden joy; and he used sometimes to think, that if he had gone to William Daymer instead of to London, he might there have spent his leisure hours in music, and stolen snatches of that dear happiness so associated with the remembrance of his mother. But he drove these thoughts away—his work-day life pressed upon him, his master was strict, and Claud strove, as he had ever striven, to do his duty, which he found demanded the sacrifice of an enjoyment which was too intense to be lightly pursued.

With Miss D'Albert, William Daymer, and Cornelia, all went on as usual, for some years, until they changed their quarters, and went to live at Leghorn—his business requiring his constant presence there. Cornelia was the same petted child, the same bright, mischievous, obstinate, yet affectionate thing. She was still "good on a Saturday, for Uncle Daymer," still too often naughty "for aunty;" yet she was forgiven almost sooner than ever, for the generosity and frankness of her spirit forbade her persisting in her faults—she began to see and to regret them; she had grown out of infancy, almost out of childhood; the tall, stout, bright-eyed girl of sixteen "should now be a woman," said Miss D'Albert, "and have a woman's sense." She had no small share of it either—perhaps a larger than Miss D'Albert was aware of; a woman's spirit, a woman's modesty, too, both were hers, and a delight in what was useful and independent—a pleasure in making herself, at it were, necessary to them, which they rejoiced to see; without observing (or, if they observed, overlooking) the tendency to pride and exaggeration which this also brought out at times. She had never known sorrow; since she came under their doating care, all her path had been made plain and easy. Her early career had been one of uninterrupted joyfulness—how different to Claud's! but now an event was to happen which would try the strength of her soul, and make her to know something of that dark world into which, as yet, her eye had never glanced, nor of which her spirit had ever dreamed.

Here are the three: Uncle Daymer has taken a half holiday, and proposes an excursion. He opens the sitting-room door, and calls his Nelly down stairs, that they may fix all about it. She answers his summons joyfully, and comes bounding towards him, as in the days of her infancy, with her beaming smile and laughing eyes. Miss D'Albert, a little touched with age, just a little *silvered*, as it were, and gentler than ever, takes off her spectacles, and looks at the two eager ones debating about the order of the day; and she waits quietly till they decide, and then agrees. "Oh, a sail, a sail! Uncle Daymer,

carissimo!" cried Cornelia—this fine, calm, autumn afternoon!" "Nothing could be better, indeed," said he: "what think you, Aunty Susanne?"

"Quite agreeable; I should like it, of all things."

"Yes," rejoined Cornelia, "let us make haste, and have all the afternoon. We can get Alessandro's boat. I'll fetch your things, aunty. Here are your gloves mended just in time. I shall bring you your best bonnet. I must put mine on too, in honour of the day—in five minutes, uncle!" Away she ran to prepare, and in a short time they were seated in Alessandro's boat, and away, over the sparkling sea, the breeze deliciously cooling the air, and all around beautiful and bright.

They were all thoroughly happy. Miss D'Albert quietly resigned herself to the lulling movement of the boat, and the refreshing air. William Daymer rejoiced, as he always did, in every glad influence, and in the happiness of his two companions; Cornelia's eyes sparkled like the water over which they glided, and she dipped her hand in the clear mirror, and laughed to see the track it left, as it was drawn quickly along. Just now a boat passed them full sail. They knew the party, and exchanged greetings.

The breeze still freshened. "We have only oars," said Cornelia; "do let us hoist a sail, uncle, we shall ride so charmingly; see, there is the least rise in the waves, just enough to make a pleasant path for us."

Miss D'Albert was appealed to; "she had no objection; still she liked rowing, and thought it best—but they must do as they liked." She knew Cornelia's wish would be the law. "But look, Cornelia," she added, "the other boat has taken in sail; and they are going to follow our example, and take to the oars."

But the boatman was ordered to set the sail—good old steady Alessandro. He paused a moment, and cast his eye upwards.

"She won't carry sail long to-night," he said in Italian. "A little while, to please the Signorina." "To-night!" cried Cornelia; "perhaps not—it is scarcely evening yet, Alessandro! and it is so fine."

The boatman smiled, and the sail was hoisted. The boat seemed to fly lightly over the waves.

"How exquisite! how delicious!" she exclaimed. "Uncle, would not you like to sail on so, all your life long, just so, just so?"—accompanying her words with the movement of her hands, and both going with the motion of the boat.

"Would you, Cornelia?" he asked, in return.

"Perhaps not," she answered, laughing, and again dipping her hand in the water. "I dare say I should like a storm now and then, for the sake of variety."

"I have no doubt you would create a few little storms for yourself, by way of diversion, my dear," said aunty, quietly.

"Now, do hear her, uncle! you know what she means."

"There's plenty of sunshine from the same sky, to clear them up," said William, quickly.

The fond tears contended, in Cornelia's eyes, with a little cloud of indignation on her brow.

"Well! well!" she resumed, "you must confess, aunty, that this beautiful breeze makes our sailing all the pleasanter. And so sometimes a breeze in life gives a vivacity to the passage."

"Yes, my dear. But I think I am old for the real enjoyment of breezes; and, to my taste, this is growing a little too strong." She drew her shawl closer round her, and looked up.

The clouds had gathered in the west.

"Alessandro," said William Daymer, "we had better put about.

He had scarcely spoken, when a sudden gust of wind struck the sail, and the boat heeled over till the edge of her gunwale shaved the green transparent sea. Alessandro rushed to the canvas, but, ere he could take it in, another blast, heavier than before, sent her flapping, like a wounded bird, keel upwards, on the water. Cornelia, with a loud shriek, threw herself into William Daymer's arms, and grasped him tightly round the neck. Miss D'Albert had just time, with great presence of mind, to fling the large parasol she held high into the air, as a signal to the other boat; the next moment they sank, each grasping the other, or the overturned boat, in their struggles for support.

"Nelly! let go! let go! you will drown us both!" William Daymer cried in vain; in her agony of love and terror she clung the closer.

"Save him! save him! not me, not me! save him!" she shrieked, and shrieked again, as struggling with her weight, and the embarrassment of her clothes, he let go his hold of the boat. But, making a strong effort, and

earnestly entreating her to be quiet, he forced her partly off his neck, and bade her support herself on his arm.

And there was hope and help near; for the other boat, which had previously put about, had seen the accident, and rowed fast towards them. But the waves had risen, and added to Cornelia's terror; one great roll came sweeping towards them—over them; again she shrieked, and clasped him tighter than before, and now they both sank.

Miss D'Albert, implicitly obeying Alessandro's directions, and resting on his arm, and an oar, was saved. For the boat came up, and she was rescued from further peril; but for the others—alas! there, as after a time of dreadful anxiety they rowed to shore, there lay the bodies of William Daymer and Cornelia, to Miss D'Albert's distracted and almost failing sight, dead.

But no. Cornelia breathed, she sighed, she lived. Every effort was made to restore him, but in vain; life was not quite extinct, but he never revived. That night he was gone—the warm heart beat no longer, the loving bosom was cold and dead. In his efforts to save his Nelly he had perished.

Her grief, her despair, when she woke to the knowledge of this, were terrible. Her first question was for him; her cry of pain, as restoration to life and power circulated through her youthful limbs, was echoed by another.

"William! dear William! beloved William! where are you?"—in a tone unlike her usual one of childish and caressing affection; it was deeper, fonder—it was the cry of the loving for the beloved. "Where are you? here, here!" she cried loudly, stretching out her arms to clasp him.

"Try to be quiet, Cornelia—lie still," said the afflicted Miss D'Albert, who moved about her on tottering limbs, with the care and calmness of an angel. "Do not talk yet. He is in another room. I will talk to you by and by." She lay still; as night closed in she slept; and in the morning she knew it all. Her passion of grief mocks description—her wild unchastened grief. No entreaties, no force, could induce her to leave his body; she sat, or rather crouched, beside it—caressing, weeping, wailing, moaning.

"You will kill me if you go on in this way, Cornelia; it breaks my heart to see you," said Miss D'Albert.

"Nay! it is for me to die, not you!—me, with my broken heart! What is life, now he is gone? Oh God! why didst thou take my William, my best friend, and not take me?"

Even when the time came for removing the body, Cornelia obstinately clung to it, and refused all comfort, all reasoning, all persuasion. At last, they succeeded in carrying her forcibly away, and then she immediately sank into a swoon, from which she only awaked to the more distressing state of high fever and delirium. For days and weeks her life hung on the slenderest thread. The violence of her emotions, ungoverned and powerful, had exhausted her mind to a state bordering on imbecility. But her raving evermore was, "William—William!" At last, in a low faint moan—"William, the fire, the fire!—he is gone—gone—gone; and now I go—I burn"—till entire exhaustion prostrated every power, and she became still, and insensible to all that passed around her.

It was nearly a year before she entirely recovered her health. For a long time she was extremely weak, nervous, and at times overpowered with heavy grief, which did not find relief in tears, but expressed itself in long silence, and dismal brooding. Miss D'Albert watched over her with indescribable tenderness, and was at last rewarded by seeing her recover something of her usual appearance, though her eye had lost its sparkling laughing look, and her cheek was paler than before. She never spoke now of the sad event; neither did she ever allude to it in a religious point of view. There was not the beauty of resignation in her patience, nor the peace of humility in her silence. It was the beaten spirit turned back suddenly in its joyous path, the vexed heart's flowing channels stopped in their rushing course, pent up against their will.

"Surely," said Miss D'Albert, to herself, musing upon the mournful change, "surely she loved him, with such a love as I dreamt not of!"

CHAPTER IV.

* * * *

"Whilst wonderment guesses
Where was her home?
Who was her father?
Who was her mother?
Had she a sister?
Had she a brother?"

Hood.

In nature, we sometimes see, after a long lull, after days of calm, cloudy, oppressive weather, a sudden change. It may be a change to sunshine and beauty,—it may be a

change to storm and deeper gloom. During the stillness, the lightning has been gathering behind the leaden cloud, and waits only the word that shall burst its fetter, and hurl its fiery spear across the eyes of a startled world. Or it may be that, slowly and gradually, the clouds roll off, and reveal the heaven of blue, the serene deep they had hidden for a time. So, after trial, after long, silent, even moody reflection, some characters come brightly forth, and others flash fitfully, and sink lower in habitual gloom. We shall see how it was with Cornelia. Neither, perhaps, fitly emblemed her.

Miss D'Albert had suffered deeply, and she had had no comfort in her sorrow, no outward consolation of sympathy and tenderness. For it seemed as if Cornelia's heart was deadened and shut up, and even to her, her benefactress, friend, her more than mother, it did not as yet expand again. But Miss D'Albert had the highest and most effectual support in her earnest religious faith, her piety, and resignation. Often had she endeavoured to lead Cornelia to, and disclose to her spiritual sight, these fountains of true balm; but the rebellious spirit of the youthful mourner had refused to behold them—refused to believe that mercy could be where suffering was; and turned away from wells of living water to the arid desert of her own trouble, and sat down there unrefreshed.

At last Miss D'Albert determined to urge her to activity, to occupy her, to induce her to mix with the few friends whose circle they had before frequented. She thought that by any means to break this dogged state of feeling would be good, and that a way might thus be opened for holy and happy things once more to enter in. In this she was more successful. Cornelia did not refuse to accompany her out in the day or evening; and in a little time they were again, to all appearance, living as usual, even more busily and gaily, and they met new acquaintances.

There was an English family living in Florence, with whom Miss D'Albert had been long on friendly terms, a Mrs. Smythe and her two daughters, with a son who was a cripple, from an early accident, and who devoted himself very much to the amusement of painting. Indeed, it was more than an amusement to him; it was occupation, and a very high pleasure. He was a young man of cultivated mind and taste. His family were devotedly attached to him, and made him their chief object in all their plans; and their living in Florence was on his account. He repaid their tenderness by an amability and sweetness, which endeared him the more to them all. His sisters, Julia and Mary, were never weary of helping him; sitting for him, (they were very pretty,) and dressing themselves, in all styles, as subjects for his pictures. He had made some sketches in Rome, and he asked Cornelia to sit to him for the head of a Roman girl in a group he was painting from one of these sketches. She agreed. She and Julia Smythe sat for the two female figures in the picture. During these hours, which were very pleasant, quiet, and cheerful, and varied by conversation which, to Cornelia, had a new character of intellect and taste, she recovered more than she had done yet of her old cheerfulness, and entered into the frank and gladsome spirit of her companion, and into subjects of interest and amusement brought forward by Mr. Smythe. Miss D'Albert, only too happy to encourage their friendly intercourse, rejoiced, in her quiet way, to observe this change for the better in Cornelia.

"Now, my love," she said, one morning after breakfast, "we are rather late to-day, and they will be waiting for you. Mr. Smythe likes to make the most of the short days. Make haste, dear child, and get ready as soon as possible."

"Dear aunty," she replied, fondly, as of old, "I leave you a great deal by yourself. Arn't you dull? I will come back earlier to-day."

"I am too glad to see you happy, Nelly," replied Miss D'Albert, the tears starting to her eyes, "ever to feel dull when I know you are amused."

"Thank you, aunty, thank you!—God bless you!" she cried, and, running to her, put her arms round her neck, and her lips close to Miss D'Albert's ear; "you are very good; but oh! aunty, for God's sake don't call me that again. You know—you know—oh! don't, it breaks my heart!" She ran away.

When she got to Mrs. Smythe's, she hastened into the little ante-room adjoining that where Mr. Smythe was painting, and was taking off her bonnet and shawl, when she was struck by the sound of a strange voice talking to him and Julia. It was a peculiar voice, too, rather monotonous and melancholy, and yet it seemed as if the speaker started at once into enthusiasm.

"How beautiful!" it said.

"Yes, it is a fine head," said Mr. Smythe.

"Cornelia's?—oh, it is lovely!" cried Julia.

"Lovely indeed!—who is she?"

There was a pause—so it seemed to Cornelia, and the words, *Who is she?* rang in her ears; but the speakers had not meant to pause; they were quietly preparing some colour.

"Who is she?—oh, a niece of a great friend of ours."

All this passed in a few moments. Cornelia hastened into the room. She tried to keep down the beating of her heart, so sudden and so foolish, but the colour was burning in her cheeks when she entered.

"Ah, here she is!—and so blooming, too!" said Mr. Smythe, pleased.

"So glad to see you, Cornelia, dear," said Julia. "Mr. Darcy, Miss D'Albert."

Cornelia was glad that the conversation went on for a while; she did not feel quiet enough to sit down and be looked at. But by and by Mr. Darcy took leave, and they settled into their usual places, Julia kind and gay as ever.

"And now," said Mr. Smythe, "Julia is the blooming one," for Cornelia's cheek had lost its colour, and became paler than before.

"Are you quite well, dear?" said Julia, affectionately.

"Quite, thank you," replied Cornelia, rousing herself, and beginning to talk about the picture.

It went on beautifully. Two perfect lovely portraits looked out from the canvas, like life. Mr. Darcy might well admire Cornelia's. But little was she thinking of the picture; the perpetually recurring words, "Who is she?" awakened a train of reflection, confusing, distressing, wondering, inquiring. Father or mother have I none, it said; whence have I come? "A niece of Miss D'Albert's!"—my name is D'Albert, Cornelia D'Albert,—who, then, was my mother? What does my aunt know about it? I will ask her. Brother nor sister have ever been named to me. Claud Daymer seemed almost like my brother once; yet I was never told that he was a relation of mine; he was called my cousin, even. How can it be?—*Who am I?* I wonder where Claud is now! I should like to see him again, for *his* sake who was kind to him!

And then Mr. Smythe, looking up at the beautiful eyes, could see that they were moist, half swimming in tears; he admired, wondered, and painted on.

Where was Claud? He was toiling along his chosen path of duty, and his health was failing, his strength was ebbing away in the close confinement of the city, and still he plodded on. But his master's kind eye was upon him. He spared him all he could, and in his own mind, as yet unrevealed to Claud, he had conceived a plan for his relief.

When the sitting was over, Cornelia got up directly, and put on her bonnet, saying she had promised to return early, and felt that she had left Miss D'Albert too much lately.

"Bring her with you next time," said they.

She thanked them, and said, "She supposed Mr. Smythe would not want her long. Then you will turn me away," she added, forcing a laugh.

"You deserve it for saying so, I declare," answered Julia. "You know I *do* think it banishment to be exiled from this room! Ah, now, seriously, Cornelia, bend your dark eyes this way, and don't be in such a hurry; you will be wanted for a day, and days,—for a week, and weeks,—do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear, and I understand," said Cornelia, with a real affectionate smile. "Thank you, dear Julia; you know I am always happy with you."

"Always?" asked Julia, archly; and the next moment, sorry she had said it, for the colour rushed into Cornelia's face, and she said quickly, "I thought you trusted my sincerity."

"I do; we do always. I was joking—only joking."

"Farewell! good-bye!—not to-morrow, but next day," were the last words, and Cornelia went home.

Home! yes, this is my home; it has been a home in the best, the dearest sense, to me, she thought; but it is strange that I am so completely an orphan, that none call me sister, or child, or cousin, not even niece; aunty never said so; it is other people, always, who say,—"A niece of Miss D'Albert's."

"She is not well, I am certain," said Julia to her brother; "did you see how her colour changed? Or perhaps she was as much smitten with Mr. Darcy as he seemed to be with her!"

"I don't think so," said Mr. Smythe. "I have noticed that she is not easily attracted, though she is a creature of impulsive feeling. Her manner in society is even cold; and to Darcy this morning it was perfectly disengaged, even indifferent."

Miss D'Albert saw, the moment Cornelia came in, that something was amiss; the clouds, which for a time had dispersed, appeared to have gathered again. She ate her dinner almost in silence, except when she seemed to recollect herself, and suddenly started a conversation, which was as suddenly dropped.

At last, when everything was removed, and they were alone, Cornelia got up and closed the door, which was a-jar, and sitting down by Miss d'Albert, she took her hand and looked into her face.

"Well, my dear?" said Miss D'Albert quietly. A flash of eager inquiry, of keen scrutiny, asked a question too—silent, unintelligible. "Speak to me, Cornelia, what is amiss?"

"Nothing, nothing is amiss," she replied hurriedly, "but I want to know who I am?"

"Who you are, my child? you are my dear Cornelia." Miss D'Albert spoke calmly, but she was startled.

"You don't say, your dear niece. Are you my aunt, the sister of my father or my mother? and where are the rest of my family? Are we two alone in the world now, aunty?"

"Yes, dear, to comfort each other."

"I don't understand it, though," Cornelia went on; "you don't answer my questions. And I must have an answer. I say *must*, even to you, aunty." And again the proud eyes shot their fire upon her placid listener; for Miss D'Albert had taken her determination, and her startled feeling had subsided.

"Would you like to know all about it; at least all I can tell you?" she asked.

"That is what I ask," was the impatient answer.

"I don't know," said Miss D'Albert, "why I have never told you before what it is very natural you should wish to hear, and very right you should know. Perhaps it was because we were so happy, till—till lately—and you seemed so entirely our own, that I never wished, I never thought about it, to reveal to you that you came into our care an infant stranger, we know not from whence; nor whose dear one you were, before you became ours."

"Then I was a castaway—a disowned," whispered Cornelia in low husky tones.

"That is not likely," said Miss D'Albert soothingly; "very probably it was quite the contrary. You had been, we suppose, at nurse, in the house from which my brother took you—"

"Oh, why did he take me, why was I forsaken?"

"Took you," pursued Miss D'Albert, "and brought you to my care, from scenes of disease and death." And she shortly recounted the little history, adding, that though they had made every inquiry, no trace of her parents or belongings in any way had been found.

For some time Cornelia did not speak; once she raised her tearful eyes, full of intense feeling, of gratitude and affection, to Miss D'Albert's face, and pressed her hand often and fondly. Then she withdrew them, and, covering her face with her hands, sat in deep thought apart.

By and by Miss D'Albert rose, and was leaving the room, but she sprang up and begged her to stay. "It is to you, then, I am indebted for life, for education, for everything—it is on you I have been a burden all these years!"

"A burden! Oh hush, Cornelia! you have made me happy."

"No," she went on; "it is to you I owe everything, and to you I have been ungrateful. I have been thoughtless, unkind—a burden on your means, an anxiety to your heart! Oh God forgive me!"

"You are more unkind now, Cornelia, when you say all this. My dear, my beloved child, will you not believe that I have felt for you the tenderness of a mother? and as a mother rejoices to cherish her child, so have I rejoiced to keep and cherish you." Miss D'Albert's voice trembled. "And think," she added, "how *he* loved you! our dear William! what happy hours he passed with you, and how he delighted in your love for him."

"Did he—did he? Oh, God in heaven bless you! He knew I loved him, did he? tell me so again. He knew, did he, that I adored him, that I watched for his coming, that I dreamed of him day and night—that I loved nobody like him, and that I never, never, never, shall love any one so again. Tell me—but oh, you cannot!—if he knows that *now?*" And overpowered by the sudden rush of a feeling which she had so long restrained, she burst into a passion of tears. and sunk sobbing on her kind friend's breast. Wrapping her arms about her, Miss D'Albert rocked her there, as a beloved infant is rocked and soothed on its mother's bosom. But Cornelia continued to weep, though less passionately; and, totally unable to continue any conversation, she was persuaded to go to her

own little bed, and lie down. Left to herself, and as evening drew on, and its quietness soothed her, her naturally strong and vigorous mind resumed its power. She looked back on the past; and, save with one bitter exception, it gleamed in the distance a bright and happy path; and thankfulness to her benefactors, her kind, gentle, and loving protectors, rose in her heart. She looked to the future; but there all was uncertainty and darkness. Cornelia had not a distinct and strong religious faith. Her religion had been hitherto a thing of emotion and impulse. It did not now serve as a support, or guide, or consolation. She had a proud and independent spirit, which now seemed to supply in itself sufficient support; she never thought of questioning its efficacy or wisdom. She reasoned thus; "I am eighteen—very nearly—I am young and healthy. Aunty is getting old; she is not rich—far from it—I have been a burden to her. I will go and get my own living. I will take care of myself now. I have been cast off; yes, I must have been uncared for by those who should have protected and saved me. I will trouble no one any further. I will stand alone. I am not afraid. My heart has been alone, oh, how much! how lonely! since *he* was taken away. And now nothing will be hard. I am strong. I feel an inward power. I can do it. I shall like the work—perhaps the struggle. I shall rejoice in it. I feel as I never felt before—power, hope, energy are now wakening within me."

The door was softly opened—a footstep paused, then advanced on tiptoe.

"I am not asleep, aunty—is it you?"

"Are you resting, dear?"

"Yes, much better, thank you."

Miss D'Albert came and kissed her. "I advise you not to come down, but have a long night's rest."

"So I will." Cornelia was glad, for she wished to think, and to mature her thoughts, before she talked to Miss D'Albert again. And with her mind so preoccupied she could talk of nothing else.

"You are better I see, darling. Go to sleep."

In the morning Cornelia came down a new creature. Miss D'Albert was surprised, pleased too, but it seemed almost unnatural. After breakfast, "Aunty," she said, "you will let me call you aunty always, won't you?—I am going to tell you something. I cannot live as I have lived. I must not be useless to you, to myself, as I have been. I am going to get my own living."

"What are you dreaming of, Cornelia?"

"Not dreaming at all, aunty. I fully intend it."

"Well then, what are you to do?"

"Be a governess."

"You are not half educated for that."

Cornelia opened her large eyes, and looked surprised.

"I tell you that it is quite a vain idea, my love."

"A nursery governess then, a bonne—a nurse!"

"Cornelia, you have not learned to control yourself sufficiently, to be able to control others."

"Aunty, you are hard upon me!"

"You are hard on yourself, my child. I am kind."

"I will be a servant then, if I am fit for nothing else. I will work with my hands. I will earn my bread."

"You might have been able to teach others, had you applied as you ought to have done, and taken advantage of opportunities, dear Cornelia. We all knew, you knew yourself, that your talent for music was considerable, your voice capable of the richest cultivation, yet you have scarcely mastered the rudiments of musical learning. So with other things. You have talent, but what is it, without study and cultivation?"

"You are right. I feel it now," answered Cornelia; "I look back, and I see desert wastes of lost time."

"Then talk no more of leaving me, child. I could not part with you; but you will endeavour to repair this lost time, and be able to stand alone and protect yourself, when the time shall come for our irrevocable parting."

"But I intend to leave you now, that I may come back to you, able to assist you and nurse you in your old age, aunty. My plan is best, I assure you."

They talked for a long time, but without agreeing as to the main point, and Cornelia positively adhered to her resolution, which she said "she hoped to have an opportunity of putting in practice soon."

"And now come out, aunty. The fresh air will do us good. And as we go along you can give me some more of your good advice, and tell me how I can best prepare myself for my new life."

But Miss D'Albert did not like the subject. She really dreaded having to part with her

dear change, and she dreaded her being thrown on the world alone, with her beauty, her talent, her impetuous feeling, her want of steady perseverance and application. Perhaps her own fears caused her to under-rate a little the strength of Cornelia's mind.

The next day, Cornelia joined her friends again in their pleasant studio. She heard no conversation this time, but when she entered the room, there was Mr. Darcy sitting alone, earnestly contemplating the picture. She paused an instant; he looked at her, but he neither rose nor spoke—so deeply had he been studying her face, that when the real one appeared before him it did not dispel the illusion—he felt dreaming! But the next instant he started up; he apologised, his manner was polished, he was generally self-possessed, but now half confused.

"I was literally lost in admiration of this picture," he said. "I envy Mr. Smythe the power of re-producing such beauty. The whole picture is delightful."

"I am glad you like it. Mr. Smythe values encouragement. I think he paints finely, but I am no judge."

"In this instance," he said, and smiled, "you will allow that we may judge more justly than you can. Your own portrait is perfect."

"Dear me!" she exclaimed suddenly, "so it is! and I never thought of bringing aunty to look at it."

"If your aunt admires it half so much, and thinks it half as like as——" He stopped, for, looking at her, he saw she blushed crimson and turned away. It was not at what he said, it was at a thought which had arisen in her own mind.

"I thought I should find Mr. and Miss Smythe here," said Cornelia. "Ah! here they are."

"There you critics stand!" cried Mr. Smythe, as his sister gently wheeled him in his chair into the room.

"Admirers, you should say," said Mr. Darcy.

He staid about half an hour as before, and then took leave.

"I rather like Mr. Darcy," observed Julia.

"I heard him ask yesterday who *I* was," said Cornelia; "pray who is he?"

"Why indeed we don't exactly know, which seems odd," replied Mr. Smythe; "he was introduced to me by a friend who met him abroad, as we do now; he is a gentlemanly person, and has fine taste in art."

"I believe," said Julia, "he is the son or grandson of an English nobleman, a Lord D——, so they say; but there seems to be a sort of mystery—a blot in the 'scutcheon somewhere. But I really don't know."

Cornelia was silent. "A mystery about it." She was sorry for Mr. Darcy; "perhaps," she thought, "he feels as I do."

"By the by," said Julia, "who do you think I heard of yesterday?—she has been the last month here, and we did not know. Old Mrs. Stanford!"

"You don't say so! Let us go and see her soon." Mr. Smythe seemed pleased.

"And she is rather low, they say. All alone, too, it's so very melancholy for her! She has so few friends or relations; I do wish she had a kind companion."

"She is a peculiar person, though," said Mr. Smythe, "and there are not many who would suit her. Her blindness, and her odd ways together, would make any person's position as her companion rather an onerous one."

"But she is really so good," said Julia; "and then her réunions for music are so charming. Cornelia, we must take you to one. Mrs. Stanford lets us take who we like, and you cannot think how delightful the music is; she has all the best performers, and is so fond of it, we call her the 'Fanatica.'"

Cornelia was thinking, and she made no answer.

"Let her be—let her be," whispered Mr. Smythe—"one moment—there! 'tis done—thank you, Miss D'Albert; you unconsciously gave me a most beautiful effect of light by the position of your head—now, Julia, chatter away as much as you like."

Cornelia started. "I beg your pardon, Julia. What were you saying? oh tell me more of Mrs. Stanford. I think I should like her."

"I am sure you would. Especially as you are rather peculiar yourself; you would suit her all the better," laughing; "but I can't tell you much more about her, for we have only known her since we came to Italy, and moreover there is a good deal of *reticence* about the old lady, which prevents our getting very intimate."

"Is she very old?"

"Yes, very old and very beautiful! do you think that odd? It is even so. I believe she looks older than she is. She is about seventy, I should think, or not so much. But she is

always so exquisitely dressed, such lace and such velvet! her hair is as white as snow, you can scarcely see the line between it and the broad white brow. Her figure is erect, but it does not look like a thin young figure bearing up an old head; no, she looks old altogether, noble and venerable, and like no one else I ever saw."

"Did I hear you say she was blind?"

"Yes; I believe the result of a dreadful illness. But no one seems to know exactly anything of her circumstances, except that she is very rich, and very generous; and, as I said before, very peculiar."

"Our friends are mysteriously interesting, you see, Miss D'Albert," said Mr. Smythe. "We have quite a romantic acquaintance. We shall have to get up a little romance of our own, or we shall be quite commonplace."

"I dare say," said Cornelia, "there is more of it in the life of each of us than the other is aware of." She sighed, but it was a sigh rather of anxiety than sadness.

"I assure you, my dear," said Julia to her brother, "I have imagined myself a heroine of the highest class these few days past, with such fine things on, and yourself gazing at me with evident admiration,—quite enough of romance for me."

When they were taking leave of each other, Cornelia asked Julia to walk part of the way home with her; and, during the walk, she told her of a plan which had occurred to her, and in which she begged her assistance.

"Do you really think Mrs. Stanford wants a companion,—some one to read to her, and be kind to her?"

"I heard so, some little time ago; I could inquire. But who do you think of?"

"Myself."

"You, my dear!—what is your reason? What says your aunt?"

"She will not oppose me. Julia, I have no real claim upon her; I cannot tell you more. I wish to be a help, not a burden to her, and to provide for myself, if I can."

Much more was said. The result was, that Julia promised to make the inquiry.

CHAPTER V.

"Oh! dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon!"
Milton.

Mr. Darcy called again at the Casa Bianca, where the Smythes lived. But there was a new picture on the easel, and Mary, the other sister, was preparing to sit for it, in the chaste guise of a Madonna. Very lovely, too, she looked; but Darcy's heart and eye were filled with another image,—not the soft brown hair, the grey calm eye, the pale, sweet, regular features of this breathing Madonna,—he looked for the dark sparkling eyes, the braided black hair, the noble animation of Cornelia. How changed to him was the whole aspect of the room,—how lifeless it seemed!

"I think you want light here," he observed, after a long silence.

Mr. Smythe looked up. "No," he replied, dryly, "I don't; perhaps you do, Mr. Darcy. We have not quite so much sunshine today."

Mr. Darcy bit his lip, and half smiled. Mr. Smythe laughed outright, and the least bit of roguery played about the lip of the grave Madonna.

"Confess, my friend," pursued Mr. Smythe, frankly, "your sunshine came here in the shape of a young lady! I don't wonder at your admiring Cornelia; and I am sorry we have lost her,—for a time, at any rate."

"Lost her!—how?"

"Why, I believe the truth is, that her aunt, Miss D'Albert, not being very well off, Cornelia generously determines not to be a burden on her means, and has engaged herself as companion to a lady we know."

"Poor thing!" said Mr. Darcy, with feeling; "but one can only admire her the more for it."

"They say her aunt is heart-broken at her going."

"Who is the lady?" asked Darcy.

"Mrs. Stanford, who is living at the Palazzo Teodor."

Mr. Darcy suddenly changed colour; his very lips grew pale, but he commanded himself by a strong effort,—made no exclamation or remark.

"Do you know her?" inquired Mr. Smythe.

"Not at all," he replied, decidedly.

"Oh, you must allow us to take you to one of her soirées musicales," said Mary, "some evening this winter. They are most delightful."

"Thank you; you are very good. I fear I cannot avail myself of your kindness. And excuse me if I run away now; I have just remembered an appointment at twelve, and it is past. Addio!"

"What a hurry he was in, all on a sudden," said Mary. "I think he was dreadfully

disappointed not to see Cornelia, wasn't he? However, I don't think she cares two pins for him. I think Julia rather admires him, don't you? I was teazing her about him yesterday. How old should you think him?"

"Of your three questions I can only answer the last; I should think he is not far from forty."

"Forty! impossible he can be so old!"

"It is not so very old, after all," said her brother; "and Mr. Darcy is a man who has seen a great deal of the world. I imagine his experience in it has not been of the happiest. There is something sad about him; and perhaps he looks older than he is."

Cornelia had an interview with Mrs. Stanford, a few days after the inquiry had been made by the Smythes. The old lady had been attended for many years by a person whom she had found totally unworthy of the trust reposed in her. This had distressed and annoyed her so much, that for some time past she had dispensed with all attendance but what was absolutely necessary; and she had been very lonely and very much inconvenienced, her blindness rendering her more helpless than ever in her old age. She said she never could trust any one again, and she contented herself with the honest awkward services of a girl she had brought with her from England, but who was in no way a companion, nor could she even read and write for her.

At first, when the idea of receiving a lady as a companion in her house was again brought forward, she entertained it with distrust; but Mr. Smythe and Julia spoke so strongly about Cornelia, and interested Mrs. Stanford so much in her favour, that at last she agreed to her calling. Miss Smythe brought her, and left her there to talk to the old lady.

They were shown into a spacious saloon, where she sat, in her velvet chair, richly dressed. Cornelia could not at first see that she was blind; it was only observed on closely approaching her. She was surrounded by comforts and luxuries of every description,—pictures, books, and "flowers of all hue," whose fragrance filled the room; and close beside her, on a pedestal, stood a marble bust, a youthful head, noble and graceful, a face like that of the young Antinous.

When they were left alone, she turned to Cornelia, and said, in a tone of voice, cold, if not severe, "Miss Cornelia D'Albert,—I believe that is your name,—come nearer to me."

Cornelia obeyed; by her light forward step, and the rustle of her dress, Mrs. Stanford perceived it.

"Let me hear you speak. How old are you, and how long have you been in Florence?"

When she was answered—"Your voice is gentle and lively, and pleases me," she said. "It would be something soothing and cheerful to hear that every day," she added, musingly. Then a smile gradually awoke, and lighted up her face, "You are young and animated; I can hear it in your movements, in your accent. I am old, and blind, and cross,—wearisome to live with. You must have the temper of an angel."

"I am afraid mine is very far from that; indeed, I must tell you I have a quick and passionate temper. But I will try to be what you would wish; I will try to make you happy, madam. I am not afraid, if you will always trust me, and believe me."

"I am slow to distrust," Mrs. Stanford replied. "My affliction forces me to faith in others. But you must bear with me in all my perversities, and you must not cross me. Do you hear, Miss Cornelia D'Albert?"

"You will not find me wanting in kind feeling," said Cornelia, "nor in a real wish and endeavour to contribute to your happiness; if I am so unfortunate as to fail in doing so, it will be my misfortune, I hope not my fault."

"Well said, young lady;" here the tone resumed something of its coldness. "Your impulses are good; I hope your principles are steady. You speak French?"

"It is as familiar to me as English;" and a choking thought of her dear "aunty" made her voice low and thick.

"You sing well?"

"No; indeed, I cannot say I sing at all,—at least—I have learnt—I believe I have some voice, but I have been idle."

"Then you have much to learn."

"In every way; I know it," said Cornelia.

"I shall soon find out whether you have any talent for music; if you have, we must cultivate it. We shall see. Do you love music?"

"Yes, sincerely. I enjoy it more than I understand it."

"Then come and live with me; if you love music, you may live with me; I will soon teach you to understand it. Come, and I will see if I cannot be kind to you, old and cross as

I am. It will do me good to be kind. I don't mind your temper; you may go into as many passions as you like; but don't be surprised if I do the same."

Cornelia laughed: "You have given me a license I hope I shall not abuse, madam," she said.

"I hope not, Miss D'Albert; we will live as peaceably as we can. I am no advocate for reining too tight the young, the free, and happy."

It was arranged that Cornelia was to take up her abode with Mrs. Stanford the following week. They were to remain in Florence a few months, and then go to England

"And you, too, aunty, dear; you will come to England, won't you? Oh, speak to me, and don't look so low and miserable."

They had been talking over arrangements. Miss D'Albert was quite overcome with the idea of the parting, and had wept all the morning; Cornelia, on the contrary, had been very cheerful.

"I did not suppose, Cornelia," said Miss D'Albert, a little hurt at her apparent carelessness, "I could not have believed, you would feel so little at leaving home."

"I have no right to call this home," she replied, bitterly, her pride mastering her gentleness; "my home must be wherever I make it for myself."

"You allow nothing, then, to the claims of affection. The love of many years bestowed upon you, and returned by you,—so I fondly believed,—has not sufficed to make a home, in the truest sense of the word!"

"I am the child of charity," muttered Cornelia.

"Rather say, the child of love. Oh! Cornelia, only lay as much stress on the claims of duty and affection, as you do on those of blood and *right*, as you call it, and you may walk happily through life. Many are the homes, where such rights and lawful demands exist in their fullest extent, unblessed by such love as ours!"

But the proud spirit still reigned in Cornelia's heart, and she was silent. She did not thank and bless the kind lips that uttered those soothing words; she turned away, and busied herself with what she had been doing, and she could see the quiet tears upon Miss D'Albert's face, yet she did not soothe or answer her. She felt already parted—it was her home no more.

But this could not last. Cornelia was to leave in the morning; and quickly as the evil spirit of pride had mounted her heart's throne, so suddenly did she cast it down—and as she uttered the last good-night in that ever-kind ear, the holy glow of gratitude and affection warmed again the chilled chambers of her bosom. Sinking on her knees, she hid her face and wept; and the only words that struggled forth in that moment of distress, of conscious failing, earnest gratitude, mournful recollection, were, "Forgive me, forgive me all—from first to last!"

Next day they parted. Miss D'Albert did not accompany Cornelia to Mrs. Stanford's; but she received from the old lady a most kind invitation to come and see "her niece" often; and Cornelia had extorted from her a promise that she would go to England when they did. A sense of loneliness lay heavy that day, and for many days and weeks, on Miss D'Albert's heart. There was both sorrow and disappointment in it And the little house, which Cornelia had refused to call her home, was like a wide desert; its sunshine was gone, and the bright eyes and pleasant voice gladdened it no more.

The Palazzo Teodor was on "the sunny side of the Arno." On that same cheerful site Mr. Darcy had his rooms. They were *primo piano*, looking out on the street and the river. He was sitting at the window, one morning, half reading, half thinking, his book sometimes on his knee, sometimes in his hand; he had just opened the window, because the sun shone, and the day looked bright, and now he was going to close it, because it was "horribly cold, and a wretched climate," when, hearing voices below, he looked down, and saw Cornelia talking to Miss Smythe. He heard her light laugh, and some few words about meeting in the evening, and she passed on, turning again to wave an additional "Addio!" What was it in the tone of that voice, in the exquisite play of lip and eye, which was to him so irresistible, so enchaining? It was more than beauty, and more than the beauty of expression; and Mr. Darcy had seen women more beautiful, more talented, more interesting, more gentle, more polished, than Cornelia. He stood looking out after she passed. His soul seemed to thrill with emotion, his eye filled with tears—that eye, so seldom moved. He passed his hand over his forehead, and brushed back the thick hair, already streaked with grey. "It is something not entirely her own; some beauty speaks in that face which awakens emotions long silent—takes me back to years of love

and sadness, long and long ago!—yes, she is like *her*—like my mother. Oh, suffering, beloved, redeemed, mother! She is like what thou wert, in all but sorrow!" "Strange!" he went on musing; "Cornelia D'Albert--I certainly never met her before I came here; no, I could not forget it. I must see her again; not only see her, I must know her. I will venture it. I will go with the Smythes this very evening."

At this moment a young acquaintance opened the door. "I declare," he cried, "I nodded to you three times under the window, and you cut me. What is the matter; why don't you come out? Such a fine day, too!" "I think it 's cold." "Not a bit. Come out." So they went away together.

On the morning of that same day Cornelia sat with Mrs. Stanford, listening to a guitar, which was her constant amusement, and on which she performed wonderfully, This evening there was to be a concert; the first since Cornelia's arrival. They had spoken little; she sat quietly at her work, and the guitar chimed on unceasingly. At last the old lady paused.

"I hear your needle plying industriously, Miss Cornelia. Arn't you tired of this twanging?"

"I don't call it *twanging*. I 'm not at all tired, except of hearing you say 'Miss Cornelia,' which is not pretty, to my ear. Pray drop the Miss, my dear lady."

"As you please."

They were now very good friends. Mrs. Stanford treated her with the utmost kindness, which Cornelia repaid with every possible attention, and had the pleasure of being assured her society contributed to Mrs. Stanford's comfort. Her interest and curiosity were much excited about the beautiful bust. She had never dared to allude to it; but now Mrs. Stanford, pointing to it, said—

"Do you see this, Cornelia? Ah, yes! you *see* it; but I, too, can see. Do you not know that by the eye of the mind an image may be seen? Yes! blessed be God, I can yet perceive that which is invisible to this darkened sight."

She laid down her guitar, and arose, her aged form trembling under excited feeling. With a solemn affection, approaching to reverence, and with a touch tender as that of living love, she passed her hands over the head and face, lingering among the clustering curls that adorned it, as she had been wont to play with them when they yielded to her caress in the days of blooming life. "Beloved one!" Cornelia heard her whisper, and saw the full tears fall from their darkened source. "Thus I behold him again," she resumed, half aloud; "thus I refresh the never-dying memory of his image; this sense of touch, so thrilling, so acute, compensates to me for my dreary darkness. But it needed not, indeed, that I should be thus reminded—save as we would ever be reminded, by their presence, of those we love. He was my son."

Cornelia was deeply touched. She did not speak; but Mrs. Stanford understood her silence, and caught the pitying sigh that escaped her breast. By and by she resumed her music, striking the chords with a tender melancholy, till they seemed to wail beneath her hand; then the sounds grew softer, as if patience breathed her sigh with them, and music took the soul of grief into its bosom, and lulled it to a sad repose, and answered in melodious tones to its complaining cry; and while she played, the cloud passed slowly away from the lady's face, her touch was lighter, and, ere she spoke again, the cheerfulness of hope had mingled with her strain. "Come nearer me, Cornelia. Give me your hand. It is soft and delicate. I know not your face, but your voice pleases me. That is enough. Your face, perchance, might not please me so well."

"I am quite content to leave it to your imagination, dear madam;" and Cornelia smiled.

"You are impulsive, *vive*, animated, I hear that in your step; I can feel your bounding step when you enter the room. Bend down your head, and let me feel your hair. What colour is it?" Cornelia laughed. "Nero come la Notte," she said.

"So—and banded round and round about the little head, as is the fashion of this country, I believe. Here, child, tie it with this."

She produced, from a capacious bag that always hung beside her, a rich gold and crimson ribbon. Cornelia wore it that evening, and the glossy black braids it adorned looked richer than ever.

"But now, Cornelia, to business. Fetch me the book which lies on the table in the ante-room, and read over the names in the list for this evening,—the list of the performers, I mean. We must arrange things. We have a concert to-night, and I am not quite sure who is to sing. As to the company, they come and go much as they like. I have a

few friends here whom I know well. And they bring any one they like."

Cornelia brought the book, read over the names, altered and arranged according to Mrs. Stanford's directions, and then listened to various instructions as to the placing of the musical instruments, stands, and other furniture. There was some music, too, to arrange, and the old lady was delighted to find Cornelia conversant with it, and able to converse with her on its particular beauties and recommendations. So all went on as smoothly as possible.

The hour for the commencement of the concert arrived, and Mrs. Stanford, magnificently dressed, and seated in her velvet chair, received the company with a dignity and grace peculiarly her own. There was an air of quietness about these parties, not only from the silence which was always strictly enforced during the performances, but chiefly from the feeling Mrs. Stanford herself inspired, from her peculiar character, her mournful blindness, and the sort of reserve, even to mystery, which she wore to people in general. Then her liberality and benevolence, her riches and power of doing good, wisely exercised, all made her influence widely felt and greatly respected.

The company was very numerous, and the crowd thickened, and became silent, as the music began. Just then Mrs. and Miss Smythe and Mr. Darcy enter. They are received. Mr. Darcy only bows, all is quiet, and very soon everybody is absorbed in the popular beauties of a new opera.

During the pauses of the music conversation was resumed. Miss Smythe and Cornelia could as yet only exchange smiles, and Mr. Darcy a bow of recognition. He stood at the further end of the room, his gaze often fixed upon Cornelia, who remained near Mrs. Stanford. The first part of the concert passed melodiously in every sense, and then the company walked about in the beautiful saloons, and enjoyed some fine pictures and other works of art Mrs. Stanford had collected. Mr. Darcy wandered about in the vain hope of meeting Cornelia; he had seen Miss Smythe join her, but soon lost them again, and, when the second part began, he saw them both sitting not far from Mrs. Stanford's chair. Obeying an irresistible impulse, he went towards them, and sat down by Mrs. Smythe. They conversed a little in a low tone, and Cornelia was about to reply to a question he asked her, when suddenly Mrs. Stanford rose from her chair, and Cornelia started to behold the change in her countenance as she turned to Mr. Darcy. Waving her hand to the person who was singing at that moment, she exclaimed, in a voice of proud indignation, "Let that man leave my house!—does he think he can cheat me in my blindness?—does he not know that we cannot breathe the same air? Why does his footstep pollute my dwelling? Let him go!"

Cornelia sprang to Mrs. Stanford's assistance—overpowered with excited passion, she had fallen, and fainted. The concert broke up. The company departed. Many wondered, all talked of the strange and sudden scene—most of them pitied Mr. Darcy, and thought him the victim of Mrs. Stanford's eccentricity.

Nearly all that night Cornelia sat beside her, watching her broken uneasy slumber, and listening with wonder and regret to the murmured words of grief and anger that alternately broke from her lips. Towards morning she awoke, reproved Cornelia, almost severely, for sitting up, and desired her to go to bed directly. She went, but could not sleep; she tossed restlessly on her bed, and it was not till morning she sunk into a dreamy dose, and thought she saw Mr. Darcy and Mrs. Stanford together again. She stretched out her arms to save Mrs. Stanford from falling, and awoke herself; it was very late. She dressed hastily, and when she went down she was surprised to find her already dressed, seated in her accustomed place, no trace apparent of the last night's agitation—dignified, composed, and occupied as usual. But as Cornelia passed the beautiful bust, she saw on its pure surface a tear—it spoke more than any words could have done of a hidden grief.

But Mrs. Stanford immediately entered into an animated conversation, and about the music at the concert, with which she seemed to have been pleased. "You can sing, Cornelia? I should like to hear you. Choose what you like, and I will play the accompaniment. Give me the guitar. There, now, what shall it be?"

"I sing so little," pleaded Cornelia.

"No nonsense." She began to play the beautiful air, "An non giunge." "You said you knew this."

Cornelia sang. As she went on, Mrs. Stanford played with more and more feeling and animation. Her white jewelled fingers dwelt softly on the cords—her aged still-beautiful face looked upwards, as if her sightless eyes

were seeking heaven, the draperies around her seemed to move with her emotion as the crowning close of the song, "formiam un ciel d'amor," in the rich tones of Cornelia's voice, completed her delight. "Brava! bravissima! most excellently sweet and beautiful! we will have a master, and you shall come out a singer, a musician, a performer! I had no idea your powers were so excellent. This is charming indeed."

The old lady was greatly excited.

CHAPTER VI.

CORNELIA was returning one morning from a visit to Miss D'Albert, whom she had found unwell, and in low spirits. A little depressed about this, she was strolling thoughtfully along when she met Mr. Darcy. He was alone and, like herself, not in a gay mood. But this was an opportunity he had long desired—an opportunity of conversing with Cornelia. She was passing him after a slight recognition, but he stopped, and said, "Miss D'Albert, will you allow me to walk a little way with you?"

"Thank you," she replied, "but our ways lie in opposite directions. Good morning, I must hasten on mine."

"Pardon me," he urged, following a few steps and detaining her; "pardon this seeming intrusion. I earnestly wish to speak to you."

She paused, hesitated, looked up, expecting him to say more.

"I have wished to see you very much," he continued, and this is an unexpected extreme pleasure to me."

She looked surprised, perhaps pleased too, but instantly recollecting herself, said, "You must pardon me, Mr. Darcy, when I remind you that, situated as I am with Mrs. Stanford, the less conversation we have the better. I reside now with Mrs. Stanford. I owe much to her kindness."

He bowed, and drew back with a proud and disappointed air. "It has been ever thus," he said. "Not only do I suffer at her hands the most cruel and obstinate injustice, but my intercourse with others is either prevented or poisoned by the same cause."

"I am sincerely sorry," said Cornelia, "but this cannot concern me. Pray excuse me." She felt quite at a loss. She could not help feeling sorry for Mr. Darcy, and she was also conscious that she ought to listen to no complaint against Mrs. Stanford.

"One moment more," he said. "I will not wound your delicacy, the sense of right, which, permit me to say, I observe in your character. I will add nothing further on this subject. Only let me express a hope that you are happy, that you find your new residence congenial, and all that you wished."

"Quite so, thank you," she answered cheerfully, "I am very happy with Mrs. Stanford."

"I am leaving Florence soon," he said; "shall we never meet again? Do you never come to the Smythes now?"

"Not often; but sometimes I do. It is a great pleasure to me to go there, and Mrs. Stanford kindly permits it."

"When shall you be there again?"

"I cannot possibly say. Not at present. I was there last evening for an hour or two."

"I leave here soon," he said again; and though now she could have gone, Cornelia did not go. She was struck with the look of melancholy, the deep lines of care, the almost wasted expression of his face, and she pitied him.

"And I believe we go to England before long; the beginning of May, perhaps."

He brightened. "To England! So do I."

"Yet we are not in the least likely to meet," she said archly, with a half smile, "so I must bid you good-bye in good earnest."

"Good-bye," he said, offering his hand; "good-bye, my dear Miss D'Albert; you have made me happy by assuring me of your happiness, in which I can never cease to feel the deepest interest."

He turned hastily away. She hurried home.

"How long you have been, child!" said the old lady when she went in. "I thought you were never coming back. I begin to think I can't do without you, Cornelia. I am darker than ever when you are away. But never mind—never mind. I have charming news for you. I have just had a young friend of mine here, the most perfect of musicians, to my taste. He is an Englishman, too, and has only just returned to Florence. I have engaged him to give you a lesson in singing three times a-week. Now are you not happy?"

"Very happy, indeed, I shall be, to please you by trying to do my best."

"Well, that's all very amiable and proper, and so forth, but it's not what I wanted you to say. Are you not happy for your own sake? Won't you like it dearly?"

"Yes! you could not give me a greater

pleasure, dear Mrs. Stanford. I have been wishing so much to improve."

"You must work hard. But that is nothing if you are fond of it. Love is our best master in everything. I will help you whenever I can. Come and kiss me now, there's a good girl. You fresh Lily! How soft and cool this cheek is! Ah, Cornelia! it's long since I have kissed any one! Go away now."

Cornelia, surprised and affected by this fondness, felt that she could do anything for Mrs. Stanford. "Oh, how much must she have suffered!" she thought, "how much must she have lost!—and I have repined and mourned so deeply, so rebelliously, against my one sorrow—my only sorrow—but it was great!"

She made a resolution to apply herself to the study of music, and endeavour to realise Mrs. Stanford's expectations; she felt she had the power, she was sure she had the will, and perseverance was all that was required. Mrs. Stanford had not overrated her talent.

The next day she was to have her first lesson.

"Go and take a little walk to refresh you first," said Mrs. Stanford; "go as far as the Casa Bianca, and ask Mr. Smythe and one of his sisters to come in this evening, quite alone, and we will have a little music."

The Smythes had been greatly distressed about the affair of Mr. Darcy, and it was a pleasing surprise to them to receive this message. But the fact was, that Mrs. Stanford was unaware with whom Mr. Darcy had come, and the subject was too painful to her to inquire into. So that nothing was said on either side. They promised to come, and by twelve o'clock Cornelia was at home again, waiting the arrival of her master.

A little knock at the door of the saloon—

"Come in, my dear Mr. Daymer!"

Cornelia started up, and stared at the door, and her face grew red, then pale as death—it was long since she had heard that name.

"Come in—we are all ready. Mr. Daymer—Miss D'Albert, your pupil."

Claud clasped his hands, and stood silent one instant, gazing upon the changed, the beautiful girl.

"Cornelia! can it be?"

"Claud, yes, it is you!" she cried, and bursting into tears as he took her hand, she could only weep.

"What is the matter, Mr. Daymer? Miss D'Albert—I beg you will compose yourselves. Pray explain. I hope there is no distress."

"Distress! my dearest madam, I assure you, on my part, joy, pleasure inexpressible, to meet again in Miss D'Albert an old valued friend."

"Tell her, tell her, about *him*," whispered Cornelia.

She ran out of the room.

"What is amiss with her? what can it be?" said poor Mrs. Stanford, quite puzzled.

"I have not seen her since she was a little girl," said Claud; "then she was very happy with my uncle, William Daymer, whom she called her uncle too, and who was nephew to the aunt she lived with, no connection, however, of mine. I heard that at his death, which occurred only two years ago, she was greatly distressed, and has never quite recovered the shock she then received. He was drowned while attempting to save her, when an accident happened to the boat in which they were sailing. It is the recollection of all this which has overpowered her now."

"Poor dear child! She is a sweet creature, Mr. Daymer, though I fear a little too easily overcome, as in this instance. She must learn to control herself. I am very glad however to find you are old friends; and now I have double expectation of success as to the music. You will be charmed, my dear Mr. Daymer, with her voice. It is something wonderful as to power, richness, and melody, though evidently almost untutored. I wish you to bestow great pains on this work. She has assured me that nothing shall be wanting on her part."

"Suppose," said Claud, "that we postpone the lesson till to-morrow morning. I can make it convenient to come, and she will be in better spirits."

"You are very good. Then pray come in this evening early, and let us have a little music; I shall be pleased to introduce you to the Smythes, who are coming. No one else."

He promised to come. He said truly it would give him pleasure. Poor Claud! how much pleasure he dared hardly own to himself. He had never felt so happy in his life before.

The friend with whom he had been in London, whose good opinion he had entirely won, had set him free from his engagements there; seeing his delicate and failing health, he assisted him to return to the old early life which had suited him so well, for which he was best fitted; he had resumed his study of music with renewed ardour, and had now

come abroad, (Florence was his choice at once,) where he expected to find a better field than in England, for the cultivation of his profession, and greater opportunity of making his living by it. His early life of frugality, and the kindness of his relation, together with a small annuity which he inherited from his mother, left him not without certain means of support, and he was setting out on his new walk in life with peace of mind, and a hopeful zeal. He had known Mrs. Stanford in England, and sought her immediately on his return to Italy.

And so he and Cornelia met again. He had never heard of their return to Florence and leaving Leghorn. Their intercourse had ceased with William Daymer's death. But how often in spirit had Claud visited them—how often had he longed to see again that bright face which in infancy had charmed his fancy, and won his boyish heart!

And the evening, when it came, was so delightful! Cornelia had recovered her self-possession, and was kind, and frank, and sisterly. Mrs. Stanford, among the few she knew and liked, was agreeable, even fascinating. Mr. Smythe, always pleasing, seemed particularly so with her. Julia's grace and gentleness and youthful spirits gave vivacity to the party; all too agreed in enjoying music; and in truth it was a night such as would have made any devotee a more impassioned worshipper.

Do we not all know the pleasure of awakening to the prospect of a happy day? That peculiarly slow dawning consciousness of something very agreeable awaiting us? We don't know what this coming joy is, till we begin *to think*,—to say, this is *the* day!—then gradually we recollect, it is the day on which I am to see such a friend—the day which is to bless me by bringing such a one—the day I have longed for, which is to bring me to such a goal—or the day, perhaps, of rest after long and weary labour, which is to bear to me on its wings the golden fruit,—oh, joyful awakening! when the soul, as the body, is in repose; when, like grey dawn over the peaceful sleeping world, thought and feeling with invisible hands open the portals of the silent soul, and admit the light. And then, like the glorious sun, rises the bright certainty of consciousness, the warm delight of full assured expectancy.

So it was with Claud next morning.

So was it not with Cornelia. She had spent a night troubled with sad dreams; and she awoke, struggling with William Daymer in the choking waters;—widely, suddenly, she opened her eyes, and stared around her; she had grasped the bed-clothes and the pillow, in her agitation; her breath was having thick and fast, and her lips were quivering with unuttered words. She sprang up as if in terror, and, as waking memory returned, she covered her face and wept.

But this is the day on which she must exert herself, the day on which she is to begin her real study of music, on which Claud is to commence his teaching, on which Mrs. Stanford has set her heart. So Cornelia tries to shake off the depressing effects of her dreams, and to come down cheerful and prepared. But it is in vain. Somehow or other the tears will start again, and the beloved image of William Daymer will rise sorrowfully before her, with the idea of seeing Claud. The ungoverned passion of that grief was yet alive in the ashes, and the flame had burst forth when the fuel touched it. She thought she had learned to control her feelings; that lesson so often insisted on by Miss D'Albert! but she had yet to learn how hard it was; how weak her resistance, how transient her triumphs. Poor Cornelia! Mrs. Stanford missed her lively voice at breakfast; that quick ear detected the want of vivacity, even in the footstep, as Cornelia entered the room. She was herself in a vivacious and expectant mood, and was a little fretted by the unconscious want of sympathy about her young friend. So she said impatiently, "Now be quick, and let us have breakfast over soon. Mr. Daymer will be here between eleven and twelve o'clock, and you must go and take a walk first to make you feel fresh and well. You seem a little dull, Cornelia. What's amiss?"

"Oh, nothing. But I did not sleep very well."

"Give me your hand, child. Why it's quite feverish."

"It's always hot—nothing at all."

"Don't be cross, child. Go and put your bonnet on, and take a walk. The air is the best thing to blow away dreams. Dreams! nonsense! girls are so silly! A few waking real dreams, such as I have had, Cornelia, would cure you of caring about your night visions."

"We have all had our troubles, I dare say," said Cornelia gravely.

Mrs. Stanford smiled. "How old are you, my dear!"

"Eighteen last birth-day; very near nineteen, now."

"Talk of your troubles when you come to my age. I am seventy-five. I have lived and suffered long."

Cornelia's heart swelled. "But we feel most keenly in youth," she said, "and if one sharp trial befall us then, why then it is hardest to bear."

Something between a sigh and a sob caught her breath as she faltered out the last few words.

"Well, well, my dear, don't talk any more. Go out or stay in, as you like. Perhaps to-night, if we are alone, I will give you an idea of what real sorrow and trial are. I will tell you what I have gone through. Give me the guitar."

As she did so, without replying, Cornelia pressed to her lips the white and richly-jewelled hand. And then she put her things on, and walked quickly as far as Miss D'Albert's.

"Dear old auntie! I have longed so to see you," she said, as Miss D'Albert embraced her fondly. "Who do you think is come, oh, aunty—who?"

"I know, he was here early—Claud!"

"Yes; so you have seen him; he is to teach me music. I am to sing with him. I cannot, I never shall; I don't know what to do! It reminds me so—its makes me tremble, shudder to remember—oh, aunty!—his very name——"

"My dearest child, you must not give way so. It should be, on the contrary, a comfort, a very great pleasure to you, to see Claud, and to learn from him; to see too how high he stands in character and acquirements, and how kind Mrs. Stanford is to him. This all makes me very happy. And it is what he, our dear lost William, would have wished. You should feel it too."

"Oh don't, don't speak of him! I can't bear to hear you! Oh, I am so miserable! I *was* calmer, happier; but all is uprooted again; all the sore places in my heart are torn and bleeding. William! William! William! come to your own Nelly! take her in your arms again! No, you never, never will!"

She buried her face against the little old sofa where she had so often played with him.

Miss D'Albert soothed—consoled—advised—bade her to pray to God to calm these unhappy feelings, to enable her to conquer them. But Cornelia had not sought for strength there. She was silent. After a while she grew calmer. There was a knock at the door. Miss D'Albert looked out and saw it was Claud, so she took the opportunity of running out to him, and asking him to make every allowance for Cornelia, and to support her as well as he could, if she gave way in Mrs. Stanford's presence. He was only too ready, too happy, to do so; and he promised everything.

"And, now," he said, looking at his watch, "it is full time we were there. The old lady is punctuality itself. I would not vex her for the world."

They called Cornelia; and she, summoning up all her pride and resolution, set out with him in haste, and apparently cheerful, and they were soon with Mrs. Stanford.

She was fortunately in high good humour, though a little anxious.

"Good morning, my dear Mr. Daymer! I hear your step, and Cornelia's too. Now, let us to business. We must not waste Mr. Daymer's time, Cornelia, so come back quickly."

When Cornelia had taken off her bonnet, and bathed her red eyes, she hastened to the lesson, and on the whole got through it very tolerably. Every now and then as Claud glanced up at her face, and saw her lip quiver and her bright cheeks burn, he joined his voice to hers, and, strongly supporting it, bore it on, and hid its weakness; and Mrs. Stanford sat listening and thinking how beautifully those voices blended! Encouraged and assisted as she was, Cornelia gave token of no ordinary power, and Claud assured Mrs. Stanford, "she would soon sing beautifully." So they were all pleased. Claud was enchanted with his pupil—her feeling and her talent. Cornelia was glad to have succeeded so far well, and Mrs. Stanford was pleased that her favourite project was likely to succeed; that she should make a fine musician of Cornelia.

At night Cornelia listened to the following account of Mrs. Stanford's life with eager interest:—"I am better and brighter at night," the old lady said, "and memories then come clearer. But answer me one question, Cornelia; the man who calls himself Darcy, do you know him?"

"I know him slightly," she answered; "I have met him sometimes, merely in the street, and at Mr.——"

"No matter where; I don't want to hear. You know him; that is enough. I am sorry

for it. I bid you avoid him. If he seeks you, shun him as you would shun evil. If he speaks to you, turn away; be deaf to him. This will be explained when you hear what I am going to tell you. There are very few who are acquainted with those passages in my life which I am about to relate to you. Stranger as you are, comparatively, to me, I feel drawn to you —I believe I may trust you. Come nearer to me, for I must speak low."

She then related what follows, with clearness and composure, until the later part, which agitated her much. But the eye of memory seemed to trace the past vividly; there was no pausing to recollect, no hesitation; there it lay, clearly drawn out under her mental vision, this story of her life.

CHAPTER VII.

"Nessun maggior dolore
Che recordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria."

Dante.

"On a dark cold night, in Scotland, in the month of December, in a little inn by the wayside, I first looked out on this strange world. They say that that night the howling wind and the driving sleet, the flashes of lightning and the rolling thunder, were fearful to behold and hear; all who had shelter to flee to sought it hastily, and in terror. My poor mother, young, and but one year married, was hastening to join her husband, a captain in the navy, before he sailed with his ship for Spain. She was accompanied only by her maid, who was also a married woman, and who returned, afterwards, to her friends. The rapid travelling, her anxiety, and a fright, caused by the horses, startled with the lightning, running away, brought on her confinement prematurely. So there I was born; and there, only two days after, the terrible news reached her of my father's death, by an awful and sudden accident, the very day he was to have sailed. She was recovering well, and anxiously hoping to be able to set out, still in time to meet him, when the intelligence was brought, abruptly, to her bedside. She did not survive the blow many hours, and I was left an orphan of two days old, in the hands of strangers. But God willed that I should live. Ah, Cornelia! this throbbing heart was not to be stilled; I was reserved for a fate to which this early trial was a fit prelude. I used to wish I had died then, but since I have felt that the wish was wrong.

"The woman of the house, who was herself a young healthy mother, took me to her bosom, and there I was nourished; there I first met the smile of kindness, and felt the pressure of protecting arms. My father's father sent for me, but my foster mother would not part with me, for I grew and thrived under her care, and she loved me as one of her own children. When I was two years old, however, my grandfather himself fetched me away; and my earliest recollections are of him, and of the house where I lived with him in the country. My mother's relatives were few and distant; she had no sisters, and her mother had been long dead, so no one interfered with my grandfather in his care of me. He was almost a recluse, though a man of property, and well connected. I remember no friends but himself and my nurse, and no playmates but the old spaniel, and the sleek demure cat, that shared our fireside. I pass over many years, until I was between seventeen and eighteen, when my grandfather died, leaving me the sole possessor of his fortune, and the estate where we had resided. I had now no protector but my nurse. My grandfather's executor was an old gentleman who lived in a distant county, and for whom I had conceived no affection during his annual visits to our house. I grieved sincerely for my grandfather's death, for I had loved him with more than a spoilt child's fondness; and I cannot, to this hour, forget the feeling of lonely desolation that crept over my heart when I saw the hearse that bore him winding its solemn way down the shady avenue; and at night, when my hasty faltering footsteps seemed to echo through the empty house which my superstitious fears had peopled with shades of the departed, how wretched I was!

"But I was not long alone. The executor, Lord H——, who had come with other friends to the funeral, remained with me; and, about a week afterwards, was joined by his son, a young officer, who was at home on leave of absence. I had often heard of this son, but had never seen him, and I had associated him in my own mind with his father, whom I disliked; so that I was much annoyed when I heard of his unexpected arrival. I was offended that he came uninvited. I was silent when told by his father that he was about to join us; and the day he arrived, I kept my room. Next morning, I stole out for the early walk I had been accustomed to take with my grandfather, and as I returned, I met, on the steps of the garden door, a stranger, not the

intrusive dashing young soldier I expected to have seen, but a gentleman, not very young, and dressed in mourning. His manner was quiet and respectful; he stepped aside as I passed, merely taking off his hat in silence. There was a grace in what he did, a dignity —I see it now! I was agreeably surprised, but imagined it could not be the same; and, wishing to ascertain it, I entered the drawing-room before dinner, as usual. There was the same gentleman, and Lord H——, who introduced him as his son. During dinner, I remarked the same quiet respectful manner; no effort to attract my notice—rather, perhaps, the contrary. His conversation was easy and agreeable—his voice particularly pleasing. The next morning, and the next, I walked out alone, seeing my guests only in the evening. The third morning I met him in the garden, and we passed several hours together. I was cheerful, and happier that day than I had felt since my grandfather died. He asked me if I sang; and, in the evening, for the first time, I touched the piano, and sang; he accompanied me. The next night, and the next, it was the same. How gladly now would I forget those hours!

"The next morning, it was a Thursday, they were to leave; and I bade them good-bye on retiring for the night; but I only lay down, and tossed restlessly on my bed; I could not sleep; and, at last, feverish and weary, I got up, and threw my window wide open. It was a June morning; I walked about my room, and so passed an hour or two. The gentlemen were to start early; and, as I stood at my window, I heard footsteps on the gravel below, and the voices of Lord H—— and his son. God knows, I was not there to listen, but a fascination chained me to the spot, and I heard—'Is she not beautiful?' from Lord H——. 'She is indeed,' was the reply. 'And charming?' 'Very; but——' 'But what?" 'I have seen another, perhaps, less beautiful, but more charming.' 'You mean Miss——' I lost the name, pronounced in a low voice. Oh, what would I not have given to hear it! With a struggling effort I repressed a cry of 'Who?' They came into the house; I listened no longer; I went back to my bed, and lay down. A few minutes afterwards the carriage drove to the door; the tread of hasty feet—the shutting of doors, the words, 'All right!'—the departing wheels—the quiet ceasing of all sounds; it was soon over, and I was alone again. But my loneliness did not continue long. Acquaintances, or rather those now claiming acquaintance, thronged about me. I was invited to the neighbouring houses. Any gaiety or society was new to me, for my grandfather had been almost a hermit in his habits, and had never permitted me to see any company at his house, or elsewhere. I believe I cared very little about it, and was an exception to the general rule—hated balls and dancing—felt only *ennuyée* with dinner parties, and teased by the requirements of fashion. However, I was by-and-by induced to go out, and to see people at home. Young ladies admired my garden, my music, my dress; young men praised my horses (for I made friends of dumb creatures), and my riding, in which I took great delight. I was pleased—pleased, but not happy; the recollection of that morning never left me. Though I was courted, sought after, flattered, the idea haunted me perpetually that there was *one* to whom I was less charming than another, and to that one I would have been more so than to all the world!

"A year passed, and again I met him, unexpectedly, at a friend's house. I was conscious of embarrassment, and felt my cheeks burn, and my heart beat; but he approached me calmly, almost as if we had never met before, except for a quiet smile of recognition. We shook hands, and I turned away to hide my mortification, and began to talk gaily to the lady next me. But I shall never finish my story to-night, if I make it so long. All is so vividly impressed on my remembrance, I can pass over nothing.

"That evening, at dinner, and afterwards, he sat beside me; again we sang together —we rode together—and again I was gay and happy, and tried to drown the recollection of the words that had haunted me.

"When he took leave of us, at the end of the week, he bade me adieu, in a marked manner, that made me feel certain I should hear from him or see him again; and in a day or two came a letter—he offered me his hand. Young, impulsive, with none to consult with or advise me, I replied, and my answer brought him to my feet, grateful, he said, and happy. I loved him, Cornelia, as man is seldom loved; and the next few months were to me a dream of bliss, such as surely might compensate for years of sorrow. One thing, only, vexed me; I urged him to sell his commission, and retire from the army, that we might live at my country-house, and this he firmly resisted. When I urged it, he was stern, almost unkind, and I desisted.

"We were married, and I accompanied him to Ireland to join his regiment. He was kind to me always; yet, at times, there was a something in his manner that made me not so happy as I had been; and then, like an evil Spirit, shadowing my heart, would come the remembrance of that morning, when the idea that he loved another had been suggested; but I struggled against the impression.

"In a year we returned to the country, and there my son was born—my beautiful only son! Look, Cornelia, at the bust; it is beautiful, but no mortal hand can mould his image; his was a beauty in which were united a noble manly frankness, and a spiritual delicacy, that a woman might have envied. Then these eyes beheld it; for years he blessed my loving sight; for years he was to me my only solace—yet how great, how sufficient!" She paused, and the tears rolled from their darkened source.

"Enchanted with my new happiness, and in the fullness of my content, it did not strike me at first how seldom the child engaged his father's notice, how seldom he caressed him, how seldom spoke of him; and when I first perceived it, I thought it was only because early infancy is unengaging to all but nurse and mother; when he got a little older, it would be all right; I looked with hope to the future, and I drove away suspicion, it seems to me now, in the very recklessness of my joy.

"When the child was a little more than a year old, his father left me, the regiment of which he was then colonel being ordered on foreign service; and it was arranged that I should remain at home until after my second confinement, when, if all was well, I was to join him. As the time of his departure drew on, he seemed to cling more to me and his child; and he was kinder, and more interested in the details of our domestic life. I bade him farewell with a deeply mournful feeling. A melancholy presentiment of danger or sorrow, which nothing could divert, was with me day and night; it seemed to walk beside me ever, it coloured all I said and did, and it breathed in my letters to my husband—he answered me kindly, rallying me on my sadness, but it was in vain.

"After the birth of a daughter, a delicate puny child, my health sank, and the physicians feared for my life. Letters from my husband, saying that he would return to me at the earliest possible moment, and the sight of my little boy, were the only cordials that sustained me. I lingered on, and recovered, but my husband did not come. Month after month passed, his letters were less frequent, and at last I resolved, though it was then the month of December, to join him with my children. I sent for Lord H—— and his daughter, who had been a very kind sister, ever since my marriage. I consulted with them, and then wrote to mention my coming to Colonel Stanford. I was answered immediately, by a letter, earnestly dissuading me from attempting it till a milder season, and I gave up my intention accordingly—or, rather, I postponed it till the spring. The hope, however, of accomplishing my object, and the kind society of my sister, who remained with me, helped to cheer the rest of the winter, and I passed it almost pleasantly.

"One morning, she took up a newspaper, which lay on our breakfast-table, reading here and there a passage to me, as she often did. Suddenly she stopped and turned deadly pale; I was playing with my child, and did not at first observe her, but hearing the paper fall, I looked up, and saw her sink back, half fainting, in her chair. I took up the paper, and spoke to her, but she snatched it from my hand. 'Oh, what is it?' I cried, tearing it from her grasp. 'No, no!' she exclaimed. But my eyes glanced rapidly over the columns; I saw *his* name, and the name of a lady; it was revealed to me now—the name I once longed to hear!

"The day after, his father arrived. It was all dreadfully, awfully true; the scenes in my hitherto peaceful home I need not describe. For myself, I was, as it were, in a wretched sleep, from which I could not awake; I was slow to believe it—but when conviction at last was forced upon me, it brought a deadness, a numbness of heart and soul more dreadful than the most violent emotion. I felt as though I scarcely breathed; an immeasurable weight seemed to press down the powers of life. I never wept, and for months I never lay down; short fitful slumbers, by day, were all my rest.

"Never did the hand-writing I had so loved and longed for insult my eye; never one word to me, or for our child. I declined following up any prosecution, as was proposed to me. I begged only to be allowed to remain in seclusion; there where I had once been happy. I received some degree of consolation, yet consolation it could scarcely be called, in the kindness of his father and sister, who remained with me some time; and on her

breast I poured forth, often, my weary moaning, and met with sympathy.

"I heard no more, for years, of Colonel Stanford, except that they continued to live together, and resided abroad, he having left the army. They, too, had a son, Cornelia! Darcy is that son! Do you wonder, now? But this is not all; oh, yet my desolation was imperfect—yet my cup of wo had to be filled. Give me some water—the words parch my lips, as the remembrance comes over me with a withering blight; oh, child! be warned; let not thy love be won by the unworthy!

"No, I heard nothing more for years, after I heard of the birth of this son. Before that, I had longed for some intelligence, something like tidings of one who was once so dear; but now I wished it no longer; parted, irreparably and for ever, we surely were, yet this was a link so strong in the chain that bound him to another, I felt it was indeed all over; even the latent unconfessed thought that lingered in my breast, that *my* boy, his child and mine, would sometimes claim remembrance in the years to come, this was torn from me—it was all over—all gone.

"No worldly necessity ever required even indirect communication between us; my fortune was settled on myself and my child, and he remained always with me; his sister had died in infancy. I had a tutor for my boy, for I could not bear the idea of parting with him; and he was all my hope and comfort. A more thoughtful, affectionate, excellent son never blessed a fond mother. I parted with him when he went to college, but our home was only a day's journey from the university, and we often met. He inherited much of his father's appearance and manner, much of its quietness, with more frankness and sociability of temper. When he left college, we went abroad, and travelled for a year or two; and, returning home, we spent some weeks in Paris. There, going about perhaps too much, and the weather being hot, he became unwell. He had always an excitable spirit under his quiet manner, and I could not persuade him to be still. On this particular evening, of which I am going to speak, he would go to the theatre. I endeavoured in vain to dissuade him, seeing he was feverish and unfit for it; but he insisted, and we went. He declared there was nothing amiss with him; but I felt his burning hand and bounding pulse, and I was all anxiety. His obstinacy that night was unusual; it was like a fatality. He would not come away till quite the end, and, consequently, we were in the midst of the crowd, and obliged to wait some time for our carriage. Meantime, my attention was attracted by a lady passing out among the rest, whose tall figure, striking countenance, and rich dress, were remarkable. She was between too gentlemen, and in another instant I saw that one of them was my husband! Years, ages, Eternity itself, could never have obliterated my recollection of that face; I saw it all—*the three were there!* Everything grew dim to me, my brain reeled, and I was falling. My son felt my clinging weight upon his arm; he turned, and saw my fixed icy gaze upon the group, but he did not understand it. He supported me in his arms, thinking the heat had overpowered me, and pushed through the crowd towards the air. *They* were in our way. My son pressed hastily by the lady, with a word of apology. The young man beside her turned, and accosted him rudely, for pushing through the crowd; he answered quietly, pointing to me, but his flushed cheek told of increasing excitement. The other still more rudely desired him to stop. He answered haughtily, without desisting—his father's son then raised his arm—oh, Heaven, my terror! I saw my son reel under a violent blow—and I know not what followed, for I recovered my consciousness only as we drove home. He was bending over me. "My boy! my dearest boy!" I cried. I looked up, and saw his fiery gleaming eye. "Quite safe, quite safe, mother!" he exclaimed; "it will be all right—I shall meet him to-morrow. Hah, hah!—Herries knows him. We met Herries; didn't you see him? He will go with me. Herries saw him—saw it all! Why, mother! you didn't fight for me!" and he laughed again, more wildly; the fever was raging through his veins! "Here we are," he cried, when the carriage stopped; "to-morrow, to-morrow we'll settle it all!" He jumped out, without waiting for the servant to knock at the door; he almost dragged me out, and up stairs, and, having reached the drawing-room, he sank down on a sofa—a hoarse heavy moan broke from his lips, with one hand he grasped mine convulsively, with the other he pressed his forehead, and then he closed his eyes. Medical men were soon with us—everything possible was done to avert the progress of the fever; it was too late. It had seized and overwhelmed him; aggravated by the insult and excitement of

that night, it seemed at once to have reached its crisis, and mind and body bowed beneath its fearful power. For two nights and days I watched beside him, speechless, tearless, in suspense and misery, and then I saw him die. The ravings of delirium had subsided—he turned his sweet face to me and smiled.

"Why I did not die too, God only knows. Life craved admittance at the gates of Death, and was denied an entrance there. I prayed to die—but I might not. For weeks, inflammation of the brain, and perhaps the same fever, caused delirium and insensibility. Then, from my weakened weary eyes came the burning tears,—tears night and day. Weeping my very heart away, I never rose from my sick bed again with sight. I was blinded for ever.

"A few words more, that all may be explained, and then I have done,—then you will understand the events of last night. When I was partly recovered, and able to sit up, and leave my room,—but it was not till more than two months had elapsed,—the principal physician who attended me, and who had been very kind, told me that an acquaintance of his, Mr. Darcy, was extremely anxious to see me, having something to say on a particular subject, and hoped, when I was able, I would allow him to wait upon me. He added, that it was, he believed, on an affair connected with my son. I concluded it was merely some matter of business; and, though I had as yet seen no one, I immediately agreed to receive Mr. Darcy's visit as soon as I was able. I am not—I never was—one of those who shrink from the mention, even of the name, of the beloved departed. To those in whom I felt any confidence I had frequently spoken of him, and I had nerved my mind to perform, as soon as possible, all the duties connected with his affairs. Therefore I agreed, without hesitation, to the visit of this gentleman.

"The doctor introduced him, and then left us. My ear had already become acutely susceptible to sound, and every voice made upon me its own peculiar impression. When Mr. Darcy spoke,—merely at first a sort of apology on entering, and seeing me the invalid I was,—at the very first words I started. Something in his voice caused within me, instantly, a nervous fear, almost horror. It absolutely smote my ear; but where I had heard it before, I could not at that instant recall. He resumed; 'I should not have ventured, madam, an entire stranger, to intrude upon you at such a time, but that the melancholy events which followed that night when it was our misfortune to meet have painfully urged upon me the necessity of making the only apology——'

"I interrupted him; and a wonderful calmness, the calmness of weakness and despair, preserved me at that moment. 'Did your father send you hither?' I asked.

"'No,' he replied, evidently surprised; 'my father has never alluded to——'

"'Do you know, sir, who you are?'

"'Madam!' he exclaimed, 'I fear indeed you are not in a fit state to see me. Pardon me, I do not understand you.'

"'Do you know,' I repeated, slowly and steadily, 'who you are, and who your father is?'

"I heard him rise from his chair; I, too, rose, and supported myself to stand.

"'I came here,' he said, 'to offer an apology that might be as little painful as possible——'

"'I accept of no apology,' I answered, 'and I listen to no defence. *Darcy* does he call himself? Ay! he did well to abjure the name he had disgraced! Go back!—ask your father who I am, and who you are. It is enough. He, my insulted and injured son, is now an angel in heaven; and angels may pardon, but I never shall! Leave me. I bless my blindness that I can never see your shape; and I pray God I may never hear your voice,—never, never again!—in this world, nor in the world to come."

"He was gone before I ceased to speak."

Cornelia shuddered.

"It is all true, Cornelia. It was a dreadful feeling; but I felt it then, and I feel it now. I can never forgive. The deep injury to myself, aggravated though it might have been by insult, and further injustice, I could have borne, and at last forgiven; but to him—him, worthy of the first and best of this world's happiness and honour—to him, my only, my beloved, my noble son!——

"Now go, Cornelia; you have heard all. Go, and on your bended knees pray God to save you from a fate like mine. Remember, that on a woman, loving an unworthy object, falls a curse in this world, and great peril for the next; for her soul may be injured, contaminated. It was my first, fatal lesson. And, hark you, Cornelia; mark me. I have heard that this Darcy is the worthy son of disgrace and guilt. Beware of him."

This history, interesting, touching as it was, related by herself, with all the earnestness and pain of reality, did not make on Cornelia the impression Mrs. Stanford would have expected. It *did* make an impression, deep, lasting, and melancholy; but, with regard to one particular, Cornelia took a totally different view to that entertained by Mrs. Stanford. This was with regard to Mr. Darcy. She had heard nothing in the story which, to her clear and naturally observant mind, exempt from the peculiar and natural feelings which actuated Mrs. Stanford, could lower him in her opinion; on the contrary, it awakened within her a strong pity for him, and a horror of the (almost) anathema with which Mrs. Stanford closed the relation.

"Great sorrow and just indignation may lead then, if carried very far, to injustice," she said to herself, as she lay thinking it all over, before she went to sleep that night. "Yet I cannot wonder at Mrs. Stanford. Doubtless Mr. Darcy's story is a sad one too, if we knew it.—Oh, what a blessed thing it would be, if she could forgive before she dies!"

She got up early next day, and stole on tiptoe into Mrs. Stanford's room. She was sleeping quietly, so Cornelia dressed, and went out for an early walk, a habit much insisted on by Mrs. Stanford. As she was coming home she met Claud; he too had been for a "refresher," as he called it. He looked delighted and surprised.

"Dear Cornelia! how glad I am to meet you! You are out early. And yet I think you look rather pale. Are you well?" he asked anxiously.

"Quite, thank you; but perhaps a little tired; I have been rather far. It is a lovely morning, this first of April. The time will soon come for us to go to England. The middle or end of May."

"I hope not so soon," he said.

"I don't mind when," said Cornelia, "it's all one to me."

"Is it?" There was disappointment in Claud's tone. "Don't you care for Florence, Cornelia?"

"Not so much now," she replied.

"Since I came," he said, trying to smile.

"Oh, no, dear Claud; no, you don't understand; you don't remember. I have suffered much since we parted—we were children then. *I* was a child, at least."

"Forgive me, Cornelia — I understand now; forgive me. But, do you know, to me that would make this place dearer than ever. Where I have been with my dear lost mother, every place trodden by her dear feet, is hallowed to me. Where she died, the very air seems sacred and beloved. And I can think of her with calmness; no bitterness mingling with my grief, no doubt or fear with my joy."

"I wish I could feel as you do, but I never shall! No, it's not in my nature, I believe, to think calmly of anything. I shall learn to do so in some things; but never about that. No! I dare not talk about it, Claud. There's a kind of whirlwind here," she said, pressing down her already panting breast, "that seems to heave up and carry away my very soul when I do. Don't rouse it, let it lie."

He looked surprised and sorry, and was silent a moment. "How differently we feel! To me there is consolation in talking of those we have lost, when we meet with sympathy. But I will not pursue the subject to-day, dear Cornelia."

"Nor to-morrow, nor any day, Claud. Have you got the new music for Mrs. Stanford?"

"I shall have it to-day. Do you know she says she shall have another concert before she leaves Florence, and she expects you to be one of the performers! So you must work hard."

"So must you, to teach me. But I'll promise to be good for once. I really love the old lady, Claud."

"You cannot love and respect her too much, I believe;" he replied, "I knew her in England, where she was always kind and benevolent, and much looked up to among her friends."

"She has some strange ideas, though," said Cornelia.

"Her very peculiarities, perhaps, help to make her so interesting," he said; "and she is still beautiful, even at her great age. I trace a resemblance between her and that beautiful bust of her son, by Canova."

Cornelia gave a sudden start, for who should they meet almost at the door of the Palazzo Teodor, but Mr. Darcy.

"You see I am not gone yet," he said, with one of his grave smiles. "I have not been well, and was detained. But I am very happy to have this opportunity of seeing you again." She thanked him. "Are you going to Mrs. Smythe's to-morrow evening," he asked. "Miss Smythe said she hoped to see you this week."

"I am not sure," replied Cornelia, "they are so good as to wish it. Perhaps I may go."

"I hope so." He glanced at Claud. "If I meet you there allow me a few moments' conversation with you, Miss D'Albert, I pray you."

"My going is quite uncertain. But good morning, I am in haste." She rejoined Claud, who waited for her.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"Mr. Darcy, a person for whom Mrs. Stanford entertains the greatest dislike, for certain reasons, and very particular ones. Do not mention our having seen him, Claud. It will agitate her even to hear his name. I think she does him injustice, but of that I am neither called upon to speak nor to judge. Are you coming in? No? Well, we shall meet to-morrow. Good-bye." She turned in, and they parted.

"To-morrow, yes, to-morrow," said Claud, musingly; "and again to-morrow, and so on for a while—and then—what then? When I see no more that bright enchanting face—what then?"

CHAPTER VIII.

"There is sweet music here— * *
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes.
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies." *Tennyson.*

CORNELIA did not go next evening to Mr. Smythe's. She wished very much to have gone, especially as Mr. Darcy was to be there; for between pity and curiosity, two very strong motives in woman, her interest in him rather increased than lessened. She felt, however, that she should be wanting in proper respect for Mrs. Stanford, in gratitude for her confidence, and deference to her advice, were she knowingly to enter into further acquaintance with him. She staid away, and the evening with Mrs. Stanford certainly seemed a little dull, and the guitar a little tiresome.

To Mr. Darcy the evening of that day seemed long in coming. His hopes made him confident; he fully counted on meeting Cornelia, and he went early to the Smythes. No one was down when he first went in. He looked over prints, books, all the things on the table, and at last over some sketches of Mr. Smythe's, which were lying out. One was the first sketch of the design for the picture for which Cornelia sat. There was a peculiar likeness in the turn of the figure expressed in a few simple lines; he was looking at it earnestly, when a gentleman came in, and Mr. Darcy recognised Cornelia's companion of the day before. They soon made the sort of acquaintance which people, strangers to each other, make at such times, and Claud joined him at the table. But something made Mr. Darcy hastily put down the sketch, among the rest. Claud's quick eye, however, detected another, a more elaborated one, of the same subject. "Cornelia!" he exclaimed half to himself, and with sudden pleasure in his look and tone.

"Yes," said Darcy, "you mean Miss D'Albert. It is very like her. You know her?"

"I knew her when a child, intimately," said Claud; "indeed I flatter myself there is a sort of connection, though no relationship, between us."

"How is it? But I should apologise for my curiosity, which I hope you will excuse. Any one who knows her must feel an interest in Miss D'Albert."

Here Mr. Smythe and Julia came in. Claud thought he received Mr. Darcy coldly; but Julia looked pleased, and the delicate colour flew over her fair face when she saw him in the room.

She had never seen Claud before, but her brother had known him some time. She sat down with him, and they began to talk of Cornelia. "I am sorry we shall not see her to-night," Julia said.

Mr. Darcy caught the words: "not see her to-night!" he repeated to himself—"disappointment,—always the same! She shuns me—I see it. But," suggested his better feeling, "could it be otherwise, situated as she is?" He was taking up a cup of coffee, and his hand shook so that the small cup overturned its contents on a drawing of Julia's. He had been very ill, and disappointment and vexation made him weaker. But Julia could not be angry. She said, smiling, she knew he would blame himself a great deal more than she could or would blame him. He was struck with the kindness and gentleness of her manner. When the little bustle and apologies were over, he exerted himself to shake off his disappointment, and entered into conversation with her. He had a great deal of the sort of information which men acquire who lead the roving varied lives of perpetual travellers, sojourners here and there, settled no where; he had been to the east, had wintered on the Nile, had travelled through the most interest-

ing parts of Spain, and not with unobservant eyes or uncultivated mind; his taste was refined, his feelings strong and generous; but his views of men and things, of life in general, were tinctured with a melancholy, amounting almost to asceticism; bright days seemed even to have given him pain, and joyous gaiety to tell of coming blight and early ruin. He wanted the freshness of mind which gives zest to pleasure, and the happy faith which leads to confidence in others, and to peaceful gladness in social intercourse. But, as he talked to her, Julia's own happy heart supplied the want; she did not feel, did not see it. She thought him extremely agreeable. And it was true. He was so.

They were interrupted by Mary calling upon her to sing; and Mr. Darcy relapsed into moodiness, and brooded over the apparent improbability of any further meetings with Cornelia. He hardly knew when the young ladies' song was over; he heard nothing of the buzzing of applause and compliment. Sick at heart, and weary, he was about to leave, when suddenly his attention was aroused to the sound of music, by a voice of such sweetness and such power as he had seldom heard. Claud was singing. There was perfect silence, and the people did not crowd about him, as they did round the piano when Julia and Mary sang.

Mr. Darcy was arrested; he had an instinctive love of music, which gave him intense pleasure, but he had no knowledge of the science. Claud's performance was such as to strike this class of hearers, as well as those whose knowledge and study made them still more highly appreciate it. He sang with a feeling and expression which, whether you heard the words or not, went direct to the heart—with an animation which spoke the love of his soul for his art, and his zeal in its pursuit—with a grace which bespoke his homage to its beauty, with a fire which revealed the heaven-lit genius within. Mr. Darcy listened—wondered—admired. Who was this Mr. Daymer then, who claimed not only friendship, but some connection, with Cornelia D'Albert?—this gifted being, this gentle, frank, and modest gentleman, who had so lately stepped into their circle, and was winning admiration on all hands? He advanced among the others, and, finding himself again near Julia, he asked her, "who is Mr. Daymer?"

Julia smiled. "He is Cornelia's music-master."

But Mr. Darcy did not answer the smile. He felt a little fretted. "He is an Englishman?"

"Oh dear, yes. Only lately come to Italy. But he was here a good deal when a boy, and his uncle was a merchant at Leghorn—or his cousin. I really forget which. Music is his profession; he has not had very good health, I believe."

"So Miss D'Albert sings?"

"Yes. She has a splendid voice, and very fine ear, but I think she has been idle hitherto. However, Mr. Daymer says she is improving fast, and no doubt she will do him great credit."

"Yes—such a pupil, and such a master!" said Mr. Darcy. Just then Mr. Smythe called Julia to him, and asked her to fetch something from his studio; "and don't," he said, drawing her to him, and speaking low, "don't spend your whole evening with Mr. Darcy."

Miss Julia was a little bit vexed, and was glad to obey his errand, and hide her very red cheeks for a few minutes. When she came back, Mr. Darcy was gone.

Claud sang a great deal that evening. It seemed as if music wore every day for him a fresher and more delightful interest. He was happy, hopeful, pure-hearted, enthusiastic. He was grateful for kindness and sympathy. He had no morbid pride, no undue sensitiveness in his intercourse with others. He went forth in the spirit of that charity which "thinketh no evil, which vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up." His pride was that of sincerity, truth, independence. He received favours as they were meant—and admiration, not as food for vanity, but as proofs only of the kindness and feeling of those around him.

He took too high a view of his art, ever to think himself great in it. Yet was he well aware of his powers, and his progress. He felt what one of the great men of genius of our own day has expressed. "No criticism will persuade me that my works are without merit; no praise will make me satisfied with myself."

Time now flowed quickly and joyfully on. Cornelia's improvement was so rapid, as almost to surprise both Claud and Mrs. Stanford. She displayed power of the highest order, when rightly directed, and brought out by him. She was pleased with their approbation; and added to this, and to her own personal enjoyment of the music, a certain

ambition to excel began to fire her eager mind. When she asked Claud, "Do you think I may attempt this?" of some difficult music, and his answer was, "There is nothing, Cornelia, you may not attempt—there is nothing you will not succeed in soon,"—then there was a bounding proud delight in her heart, that sparkled in her eyes, and made Claud think her more charming than ever. He not only gave her the regular morning lessons, he came often in the evenings to sing with her, for Mrs. Stanford.

The season was advancing, and Spring was coming on in all her warm transparent loveliness. Imagine the group, on one of these spring evenings, in that saloon where Cornelia first saw Mrs. Stanford; a magnificent room, broad and lofty, through which the music floated, and found ample way; rich crimson draperies mingling with the palest mellowest green on the furniture and on the walls; a few pictures, fine rare specimens of the early masters, purely coloured, and as purely drawn; windows wide open admitting a sunset light, and a soft air scented with the flowers of the trailing plants that grew over the balcony—musical instruments, the principal one at that moment a piano, where Cornelia sat and played, her teacher standing by, and bearing her voice along with his in song—and the old lady, in her accustomed place, her white lace draperies falling over her silvery hair, her face upturned, her sightless eyes closed—her aged form, around which was thrown a gorgeous dark purple shawl, slightly bending forward, her guitar on her knee—her whole soul absorbed by the music,—thus you might have seen them often.

But now, amid the strange and wondrous joy that panted in the breast of Claud, that joy which found its only but fearless utterance through the medium of song, was mingled the restlessness of hope, the trembling of fear. That he loved Cornelia, loved her with an affection, passionate, anxious, tender—was no longer a secret to himself—that she regarded him kindly, even affectionately, with a mixture of respectful deference on some points, and playful gaiety and carelessness at other times, was also clear. She had now, by constant intercourse with him, lost the pain of ever-recurring associations—she had even ventured to speak of the past, though never to mention William Daymer's name; and her manner was that of one whose mind had no peculiar reserves, whose fancy and whose heart were free. "Yet, oh, Cornelia," thought Claud, as he mused over delicious hours gone by, and longed for others yet to come—"can it have escaped those eyes of thine that mine meet them with delight—can it have escaped that ear so quick to detect the subtlest shades of harmonious sound, that my voice speaks to thee with tenderness, with supplication?" Then he would blame himself—he would look on his position, his labours; his career, only just as yet flushing with success; rather that of promise than of certainty. "I must bind her by no ties, I must bring her to no anxieties—I must work on yet, ere I am worthy to reveal all this to her." Yet hope made his step elastic, his lonely home bright and cheerful.

Mr. Darcy was still unable to leave Florence. He fancied he was, at any rate. He still visited the Smythes occasionally, but never met Cornelia. He had now really fixed to leave in the course of the following week, when, by a curious coincidence, she crossed his path again, and again he was stayed.

The shades of evening were softening the brilliancy of the pure Italian sky; yet the deep blue had but changed its tone to one more exquisite in richness and beauty; the silver moon reclined on her azure bed, attended by one star, just become visible to the gazer's eye. Tower and dome, touched by the sun's dying glow, stood out sharply outlined in the clear ether; the waters of the Arno rippled calmly beneath the bridges; and the shadows of evening seemed to fold the beautiful city in soft repose.

Mr. Darcy had strolled out, and for a long time had stood on the Ponte Santa Trinita, looking towards the faint outline of distant blue hills, and the nearer picturesque view of the Ponte Vecchio, and the fine, clear, architectural forms cutting the soft ground of sky—after a day of feverish heat and weariness, he was enjoying the coolness and beauty of the hour, and there he leaned, against the side of the bridge, and fell into deep thought or rather reverie, unconscious of the many who passed and repassed—some too, like himself, pausing to admire and enjoy. Among these was Miss D'Albert. She was returning from some of her constant visits of charity, and she, too, sauntered slowly along the bridge, and lingered to enjoy the air. She did not at first observe, seated in a corner, an old man and a little girl, who half lay at his feet, and, resting her head upon his knee, had fallen asleep. Miss D'Albert was attracted

by the tinkle of the little can, such as is held out for alms by the numerous beggars in this part of Italy, (especially numerous at Pisa,) and the usual supplication, " per l'amor di Dio!" uttered in the old man's trembling voice. She was turning away, and going on; he did not repeat his prayers; but she saw him pass his withered hand over the silky hair of the child, and heard him, bending down, murmur some fond pitying words. She paused and spoke to him. " Is your child ill?"

The old man shook his head. " Signora! I think that she must die."

Miss D'Albert approached, and looked at the little girl. She saw that long dark hair shading a cheek, not rounded with the dimpled bloom of infancy, but pallid and sunken. With the gentle hand of one accustomed to soothe and bless, she parted the matted hair, and touched the cold white brow—cold and white as if it had never known the summer sun of that warm clime; she put her finger on the pulse—it was slow, feeble, fluttering. " Yes, she is ill, indeed, very weak and ill."

" Signora," said the old man, " we have been almost starving for a long time; the food we could provide she has not been able since her illness to take—to-day I got something better—but it was too late, she could not eat—she refused it from my hand—she never refused any thing from me before. I wanted to take her home, but she begged to stay out in the open air—she always loved the cool evenings." Large tears, unchecked, ran down his face. Here one or two people who were passing dropped a coin into the old man's can. Among others, Mr. Darcy came up. He did not give anything, but pausing, at a little distance, he pitied, and listened.

" You had better go home, and I will accompany you," said Miss D'Albert; " she can, perhaps, walk if it is not far." " Numero quattro, Via Capucini, very near," he replied.

" Felice!" he whispered to the sleeper, " come, awake - it is time to go home." The long silken lashes trembled on the pale cheek, a thin emaciated hand was raised to the grandfather's face, as he bent over her.

" Ah! padre mio! I would sleep again. Felice is too weary to awake!" The tone of her low voice was that of exhaustion, yet fond, caressing, that of one who could win and persuade.

" But it is late, my child! your good mother waits us."

" Then she has a mother?" rejoined Miss D'Albert.

" Yes, lady, but she too is weak and poor, and she has an infant she cannot leave."

" Grandfather," said Felice, getting up, " I will try to go, but, oh, I am so tired! Come, give me your hand, I think I can help you yet." She took his hand and smiled, but her smile had in it a seriousness unnatural to her age. The old man and the child tottered on together.

" How is it," asked Miss D'Albert, " that you have come to this state of poverty?" He paused a moment, then answered with simplicity and feeling. " We were always poor, but we did not always beg. I had a son, and a son's son—but he, my son, ahimè!—he was swept away in the fearful cholera. He had supported his father, and a young delicate wife; when he died, he left her with three children; our little savings were all gone in sickness, and what could I do for them but beg?"

" And what is become of your grandson?"

" Would I could tell you! This is our greatest sorest grief. He left us but a few weeks after his father's death. He was as noble a boy as ever was loved by doting old grandfather, and he had a voice, lady, such a voice as even in this land of music was esteemed most musical. When he saw our poverty, he used to steal out in the gloom of the evening, and sing in the streets. It was little he earned, but he brought it in to us so cheerfully, and with such pride! Soon he stole away, and returned no more. Months have passed since then, and his mother pines for him—and this child, who adored him—and I——" Here he wept, and could speak no more.

Felice had not appeared to notice Miss D'Albert, but now she looked up, and met the pitying glance of one who visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction.

" Grandfather!" she whispered, with all the faith of sweet confiding childhood, " this lady will be kind to us!"

They reached the " home" of which he had spoken. Home! a word, how dear to many hearts, calling up what images of love, and joy, and comfort, and repose! This, the dwelling-place of squalid poverty, the one chamber inhabited by the many, whose sole thought and care it is to live for the day—is this a home?

At the end of a dark close passage, and a long flight of steps, which Felice's tottering

feet seemed scarce able to climb, they entered a large room, about which groups of strange-looking people were standing, or crouching, and some lying idly half asleep. The room itself was spacious and airy, and bore traces of having once been inhabited by a different class. Strange enough was the appearance of some of its present inhabitants, who now met Miss D'Albert's eye—the tattered rags, once gay garments, faded and grotesque, scarce covered the embrowned limb; the quick dark eye shone out from under the dusky hair; and the gipsy-like recklessness of expression, the half-leer, half-smile, on the thin well-formed lips, gave to the countenance a character of wildness, picturesque, indeed, and striking, but to a mind like Miss D'Albert's it was painfully so.

One group her own quick eye dwelt on for a moment, with involuntary admiration. It was one a painter might have wished for, but never could arrange; so full was it of a peculiar richness, grace, and boldness of outline, fullness and piquancy of expression. There was a man, old, but of muscular swarthy frame, with a sort of maroon-coloured garment, like half a cloak, wrapped about his shoulders. He was probably an old soldier, and describing some adventure, for at that moment he had pushed up his tattered sleeve, and was pointing to a wound on his arm, his eyes scanning its effect on an admiring audience, and his loud "Ecco!" ringing through the room. On a low seat close to him sat a girl, of perhaps sixteen, her hand holding back a mass of black hair, the loosened riband which had confined it hanging on her neck, and her face, not beautiful, but full of fire, upturned to gaze at the speaker. Two boys, almost men, leaning on each other, were eagerly listening; and a woman, who was undressing a child, paused, and cried out, "Bravissimo!" They took no notice of the entrance of a stranger, except by civilly allowing her to pass, and Miss D'Albert and her conductors soon made their way to the upper end of the room, where a quieter party was seated, apart from the rest. One, an aged woman, retired as they approached; the other woman rose too, with her sleeping infant in her arms, and smiled a greeting to the grandfather and Felice, who ran, half-fainting, to her mother's knee. She saluted Miss D'Albert with a natural grace, not unusual in Italy, and her evident sadness had in it nothing obtrusive, nothing of the mere beggar.

"I find this poor child very ill," said Miss D'Albert, "and I am come to see in what way I can serve you." They did not answer, and she spoke again, kindly and cheerfully.

Her words and manner overpowered the poor mother, and she burst into tears, drawing the little girl closer to her bosom, and burying her face behind the child.

"Ha troppo tenerezza!" sighed the old man. But the scene was soon changed to one of comparative cheerfulness. Medical aid for the sick Felice, quieter lodging, and nourishing food, were soon provided by Miss D'Albert.

She did not often recount her deeds of charity; but a day or two after, when sitting with Mrs. Stanford and Cornelia, she related to them the scene which had interested her so much.

"How I should like to go and see them," said Cornelia.

"Do go, my dear. Far from objecting, I should wish it. And, my dear Madame D'Albert," (as she always called her,) "never scruple to apply to me on these occasions, when you meet with deserving poor." She felt for her large silk bag. Her ever-ready hand sought the well-filled purse. "Come again for more when this is done. I trust to your rightly applying this, in the best way for them. I am generally averse to giving money, but not through such an almoner." This was a great deal for Mrs. Stanford to say. Cornelia, happy and excited, prepared to accompany Miss D'Albert.

"Don't stay long," said Mrs. Stanford; "in less than two hours Mr. Daymer will be here, and you have not sung to-day."

They hurried off, and Cornelia, who had seldom visited the poor, was so interested in all she saw and heard, that Miss D'Albert could hardly get her away in time. Felice had been some days in bed, but was up that day; the slightest rosy bloom tinted her pale cheek, and her eye looked less hollow. "What a beautiful child!" said Cornelia. She sat down beside her, and conversed with her in Italian; and Felice, her large eyes fixed on the beaming admiring face of her new friend, seemed pleased and attracted.

"And what fine fruit you have!" said Miss D'Albert; "and that nosegay, too! some one has been kind in bringing Felice these!"

"Everybody is kind," they said——

"But, oh," interrupted the little girl, "a gentleman brought these. Such a dear man, so good, and gentle; and he gave us some money; he came in while I was asleep, and

his step was so very quiet, it did not awake me!"

"Who is he?" asked Cornelia.

"We do not know," said the old man. "I think I have seen him before. I think he was on the bridge the night we first saw you,"—to Miss D'Albert. She did not in the least remember.

"He says," the mother gently joined in—"he says, he thinks he may help us to inquire after our poor wandering boy. He is a good man. May our Lady of grace preserve him! He has a feeling heart."

Mr. Darcy had found no difficulty in tracing these poor people. But he little thought that it was to lead to what he had so long desired in vain—a further acquaintance with Cornelia. Felice begged her to come again, and she promised she would.

CHAPTER IX.

"Something is, or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams."
Tennyson.

"I SHALL begin," said Claud, a few days after the visit we have described, to exercise my privilege as a master, and scold you, my lady Cornelia; you have hurried through your lesson sadly; I shall be jealous of these new acquaintances of yours, if they take your thoughts from your music, and me." He smiled—so did she.

"From you, Mr. Claud; a pretty conceit, indeed! How can you talk of taking thoughts away from *where they never were*, I should like to know? Tell me that."

"Oh, then, you never do think of me?"

"Not I, indeed. But I think of your music, sometimes."

"Cornelia, are you in earnest?"

She thought she would tease him, so she said, "I'm not given to flattery."

"You think it would flatter me, if you thought of me? Well, perhaps it would; and perhaps I have flattered myself, in this small particular. However, I am undeceived."

She now wondered if *he* was in earnest.

"I don't think I ever think of people," she said—"always of things."

"That is not like a woman, Cornelia."

"Women are very silly, sometimes."

"Yet you talked a great deal about the pretty child, Felice, and these poor people."

"Oh, they are something new, and very interesting, and one feels as if one could do them some good, and——"

"So it's not worth while being kind to old acquaintances." Here he touched a certain chord.

"Do be quick, Claud, in putting up that music, and don't let us waste time in foolish talking; I am really in a hurry to go."

"So I see. You shall go directly."

"The sooner the better."

"Have I vexed you, Cornelia?"

Her lip trembled. She looked away, and said nothing.

He put away the music, and was going.

"Good-bye till Friday." She did not turn.

He went up to her. "You said right, Cornelia; it was foolish talking, and it has vexed you. Forgive an old friend. Only don't take such pains to tell me you never think of me; I will not believe it; I would not believe if you swore it to me, for I know you have a heart, Cornelia—a heart full of kindness and goodness, and truth—a heart that would not willingly wound another."

She turned to him a look full of confidence and gratitude, and gave him her hand.

"Never believe my nonsense, Claud!"

He pressed that hand to his lips, and was gone.

In a few minutes Cornelia was on her way to see Felice, intending to call on Miss D'Albert on her return. The day was bright, and she felt buoyant and happy. She had been planning how she could help these people herself, and a new source of pleasure seemed opened to her in this work of kindness. Mrs. Stanford had been very kind about it, and Cornelia had told her all about the visit to them. Her bounding elastic step quickly ascended the long flight of steps leading to their room; she knocked and entered, and there, sitting by Felice, was a gentleman. He turned his head suddenly as she opened the door, and she saw Mr. Darcy. She was surprised, but not at all sorry, and greeted him kindly, with that animated smile and manner which won so many hearts. Simple, disengaged, unconscious of self, she seemed to Darcy, a man of the world, the very embodiment of that freshness, purity, and cheerfulness he so much admired, and so seldom met with. He too greeted her with surprise, and still greater pleasure. It had never crossed his mind that the quiet and elderly lady he had seen befriending these people could have anything to do with Cornelia. His kindness therefore had been quite disinterested.

"We were wondering," said Cornelia to him, after talking to Felice awhile, "who

the gentleman could be who brought those pretty flowers, and who was so kind."

"And I," he answered, "had I thought of meeting a lady here, one much less young and fair would have answered my expectations. These people are fortunate. There is another lady, I know not who, befriending them. It was in talking to her on the bridge one night I heard them give their address, and so found them out myself."

"That was my aunt, Miss D'Albert, I have no doubt. What a strange coincidence!"

"Less strange than happy," said Mr. Darcy in a low voice. "Some good spirit has beguiled me to stay on here all this time. Do you leave soon?"

"Not now till the beginning of June. Mrs. Stanford wishes me to go on with my lessons in music and singing some time longer."

"And then do you go to London?"

"No, I believe not—but into the country for the rest of the summer and autumn."

He was disappointed. "I am sorry," he began, but interrupted himself—"I had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Claud Daymer sing the other evening at Smythe's. You did not come?"

"I preferred staying with Mrs. Stanford," said Cornelia.

Mr. Darcy resumed.

"I admired his singing particularly."

"Oh, who can do otherwise?" she exclaimed. "Claud is, I think, a perfect musician—delightful! he has a soul of harmony; he had ever, from a child."

"I envy him his powers, and opportunities, and his pupil; forgive me, Miss D'Albert, I cannot help it. I do." He smiled, something affectionate and grave too.

Cornelia laughed. "I dare say I give him a great deal of trouble; but he knows I love it, and that covers a multitude of sins, you know."

They went on talking some time about music, Italy, England, a thousand things. Then Cornelia suddenly remembered it was time to go, and she had scarcely chatted at all with her pretty little friend Felice. However this was soon made up, and then she took leave; so did Mr. Darcy, and they left together.

"My dear Miss D'Albert, tell me more of your aunt—and of— of yourself."

"Indeed I must hasten home"—she quickened her pace, inclined before to linger—"my aunt, my dear good Miss D'Albert—she is not really my aunt—is the best and kindest of human beings."

The moment Cornelia had said this, she repented, for it led to the further question—"Not really your aunt? Indeed! how is that?"

"I can hardly tell you. I hardly realise it myself; it does not signify, certainly not to you, Mr. Darcy," and she smiled. "I would rather not talk about it; she is more than aunt, she is mother to me."

"Will you never tell me more?" he asked. "Am I only to see you, to know you thus? to be led to the verge of knowing more, and then turned back? Drawn to you as I feel I am, (pardon me, allow me to say this to you,) inexpressibly affected by you, by some strange undefinable link which seems to exist between us, shall I never be more than I am to you?—a stranger, maligned and hated by one to whom you are bound in duty; a mere acquaintance, if not perfectly indifferent to you, seldom seen, never thought of—shall I, may I, never be your friend, Miss D'Albert?"

"Not while I am situated as I am; never perhaps. We may never meet in future. I thank you for your kindness. It is grateful to me. But it is better we should be mere acquaintances, even strangers. Your own good sense and feeling will tell you so. One thing only I can tell you, that I have lost, or am lost to, all who were dear to me, or should have been dear to me. I scarcely know whose I am, whence I came"—she grew red, then pale, white as ashes, and trembled violently, though she had hitherto spoken with perfect composure. "I am no acquaintance for you, Mr. Darcy. I am happy where I am, and as I am. Do not press me any further. Goodbye."

"One moment, Miss D'Albert!—will you not come here again—may I not see you?"

"I shall not come here again. Certainly not."

He bowed respectfully, with deep regret—he said no more, and they parted.

Cornelia was choking. "It is very silly," she said to herself, "it is my own fault—to lead to these questions, this conversation—vain, unnecessary. What need he to know of me?—to know that I am a disowned lonely child of charity? Perhaps like himself—born in disgrace and sorrow—oh, my God! was it so indeed?"

As her mind calmed, and it was long ere it did, for she walked out nearly all the morning, she thought of him with pity, kindness, and gratitude. And then, as she entered the Palazzo Teodor, the idea first occurred to her,

what would Mrs. Stanford think of this meeting? Cornelia was truth itself; she had no idea of disguise or prevarication, nor was she in the least afraid of Mrs. Stanford. So it did not distress her, and she went straight to the room where Mrs. Stanford was, consoling herself with her guitar.

"Welcome, Cornelia! Those new pensioners of ours are unreasonable to keep you so long. But do come here, and tell me all about them. You are tired, child. I can tell by your step. Come and sit down, and rest, and then give an account of yourself. Have you been to see your aunt too?"

"No, indeed—and I am tired—tired with nothing at all. The day is very warm, and the room was close."

"And how did you find the child?"

"Better, much, and able to walk about."

"And the rest?"

"All in a better way, and the mother has got work again in plaiting straw, which has been her occupation before. Very soon Felice will be able to help her, and they will get on very well."

"And did you find out who the person was who had also been kind to them—the gentleman they spoke of the other day?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Who do you think, my dear madam?"

"I think, I have thought all along, it is Mr. Daymer."

"No, indeed, though it is just like what he would do."

"Tell me; I hate guessing in this way, Cornelia."

"But perhaps you would rather not know." She paused. Mrs. Stanford was silent too, then cried—

"I know—I do know—name him not here! I hope you have not seen him—I hope, Cornelia, I hope you have not disobeyed me—you would not dare to do so!"

"I should be sorry to do so, indeed," she said.

"But you have seen him—you have spoken to him—you have—have you not? Speak truth."

"I have. Mr. Darcy was there when I went in."

"Dare you say so—dare you name him to me? But I am justly punished. I thought I might have trusted you, but I find it otherwise; you have lost my confidence. Leave me."

"No, dearest Mrs. Stanford; no, I will not leave you in this way. Forgive me if I have distressed you. But I have told you the truth. Why then should you say that I have lost your confidence?"

"Be silent." The old lady leaned back in her chair, and breathed thick and fast. She was greatly agitated. After a silence of some minutes, during which Cornelia was quite still, she spoke again. "Are you there? do you repent of your conduct?"

"I have not done wrong," she replied.

Mrs. Stanford lifted her hands and her sightless eyes. "Insolence! Inveterate folly—obstinacy!"

Cornelia's spirit rose. She was getting angry, and their early arrangement of allowing each other full liberty to go into passions was likely to be acted upon. Her full tall figure rose, her eye gleamed, her thin nostril dilated. "Insolence!" she repeated.

"Yes, insolence, disobedience, cruelty to one who deserves it not at your hands."

"Very well, madam," she said, trying to be calm, "send me away. I will go back to Miss D'Albert. But I have not deserved your censure. I am condemned unjustly." She was going out of the room.

"Come back!" exclaimed Mrs. Stanford; "sit down."

"Dear madam," said Cornelia soothingly, sorry to see her suffer, "why this great distress?"

"Do you ask me why, after naming *him*? Ah, I see it is too late—he has ingratiated himself in your opinion—he will deceive, betray you, and you will trust him! I thought," she added with contempt, "I thought you knew he was born and bred in iniquity. Truly in sin did his mother conceive him."

Again she gasped for breath, and Cornelia, greatly shocked, did not speak. At last, after waiting for Mrs. Stanford to recover, she said, "Is he not rather to be pitied than blamed? His trials have doubtless been great, and his sorrow, probably, for what occurred, was very great."

"Is it fitting," said Mrs. Stanford reproachfully, "that you should be his advocate?"

"No, I am aware it is not. I beg your pardon a thousand times. Only forgive me." With earnestness and candour she approached, and, kneeling down, ventured to take Mrs. Stanford's hand caressingly in hers.

"Promise me one thing," insisted the old lady.

"What is that?"

"Promise me you will never, voluntarily,

see that man again, and never speak to him."

"I cannot promise that."

"Then leave me. Go at once."

"Listen, dearest lady. I promise you to seek no intercourse with him, to remember your advice, to respect your wishes, to reverence, oh how deeply I do! your great sorrows; but I cannot promise that I will never see, never speak to him. It may be impossible sometimes to keep such a promise. Trust me—only trust me."

"I dare not. If you live with me, Cornelia, it is on this condition."

"Then I must go."

"You love what I love. You must hate what I hate."

"Do not ask me to be unreasonable. Trust me."

Neither would consent to any compromise, but it was settled peaceably at last; Mrs. Stanford feeling that her security lay in Cornelia's truthfulness, and Cornelia conceding her share out of pity and respect for the afflicted and injured lady.

"Here is my hand, thou dear, naughty, ungrateful child," she said, when they parted for the night. And then Cornelia felt that it was a matter of indifference to her whether she ever saw Mr. Darcy again, and quite hoped she never might. Mrs. Stanford was very unwell next day, from the effects of her agitation. She began to talk of leaving Florence sooner, so great was her horror of Mr. Darcy's neighbourhood; but Claud's entreaties that they would stay at least till the first of June, the day she had decided, and the promise she had made her friends that they should have another concert before she left, prevailed on her to be patient. So the concert was fixed for the twenty-fifth of May, and Cornelia and Claud practised together a great deal in preparation. She did not go again to see Felice. But Miss D'Albert used to go, and once met Mr. Darcy. The poor people got on very well. The old man, it must be confessed, liked his profession; he was enamoured of his beggar's life; and far from considering it a disgrace, it was a dull day to him when he did not go and sit on the bridge in the warm sun, shaking his little can to the passers by. As he grew very infirm, Felice used sometimes to go with him, and take her work, the straw-plaiting, and, stay awhile beside him, and then she would say, "Now don't beg to-day, grandfather—you see I am earning a great deal—I can work very well." Then he half agreed; but you were sure to hear the little can as you passed, and see Felice's face raised with a smile, for she would not tease him, and she let him have his way. He knew too, the *astuto!* that an extra coin was often given on these occasions for "La Graziosa," who sat beside him; so he used to coax Felice out, and she was so fond of him she seldom could refuse to go.

Cornelia had been very successful in learning the parts she was to take with Claud, and some of the other singers, on the night of the concert. She worked hard, and was very industrious. With her voice, indeed, the only trouble was to regulate it; it had compass, power, tone, and her perfect ear modulated it. The concert was to consist of sacred music, chiefly, and they were to sing one of the masses of Mozart. In practising this with Claud, Cornelia was first awakened to a just appreciation of his genius and his feeling, and his high aim and progress in his art. And something out of that music spoke to her soul; raised and strengthened it; seemed to reveal to her the depths of thought and of emotion yet undiscovered there; told her of hope, of faith, of immortality; vaguely, yet sweetly, whispers of angelic voices seemed to float around her, long after the music ceased. "I don't know what it is," she used to say, "but I feel as if in heavenly dreams to-day;" and then the past would come gliding in, without bitterness, upon her memory, and a long-lost smile shine upon her,—tender, and shaded by a veil of waters, and Cornelia's tears would gush and flow, and yet she was not unhappy.

Unhappy, no! she was happy now. Happy in congenial occupation, in right and useful efforts. She saw that she was loved and appreciated; she felt it in Mrs. Stanford's kindness, in Miss D'Albert's constant affection, in Claud's proud joy in her progress—and it was not for Cornelia, the young, the beautiful, the proud, yet lonely and disowned one, to complain now. She endeavoured to repress the questions that would arise, and she tried, tried often now, to think of her Father in Heaven; being forsaken, as she believed she was, by her father on earth.

She was sitting with the Smythes, the day before the concert.

"Oh!" said Mary Smythe, "how glad I am that Mr. Darcy is gone! I quite shudder to think of the scene at the last concert; how strange and unaccountable it was!"

"So he is really gone, is he?" said Cornelia; "I never believed he would go, he talked of it so often."

"Gone, thank goodness! gone to England, no matter where, so as he is not here. I could not help rather liking him, Cornelia, he is so agreeable; and yet he makes one melancholy. As to Julia, there, I really believe she fairly liked and admired him. Now, Julia, confess you did."

"What are you talking about?" said Julia.

"As if you did not know, pretty Miss Would-be-indifference! Down upon the knees of your mind, madam, and confess! Was or was not Mr. Darcy agreeable?"

"He was."

"Did you, or did you not, like him exceedingly?"

"I did."

"Honest Julia! in fine, did you, or did you not think him handsome?"

"Hem! I did not think about it."

"You sinner! did you not tell me that you liked that sort of dark grey eye, better than any other—that you thought grey hair becoming—that a tall slight figure was graceful—that polished manners, like his, were so rare and so charming? Tell me this, or recant at your peril!"

Julia laughed. "I have gone through quite enough of my catechism. And if I do plead guilty to all that, does it amount to my thinking him handsome, which was your question?"

"Of course it does! Expressive eyes, graceful, polished—what man, or woman either, wants more to make him or her handsome?"

"You forget the grey hair?"

"Hah! but you thought that becoming—which, at least, we suppose to mean, does not make him *less* handsome. And so, Miss Julia——"

"I agree with you, Julia," interrupted Cornelia; "I was half inclined to admire Mr. Darcy myself."

"He was much more than half inclined to admire you," said Mary.

Julia glanced quickly at Cornelia, and then bent her head lower over her work. But Cornelia carelessly laughed, her eyes sparkled a little brighter, for she liked to be admired—and she said, "I should never get past the half way in my admiration of any man. And as to falling in love, I can't imagine how people do it. They must be much easier to please than I am."

"Oh, yes, you have lived so long, and seen so many people," said Mary Smythe, drily; "I am afraid you will have no further opportunities of judging. Of course, you'll find the men in England unworthy of your notice altogether."

"I am sure," said Cornelia, hastily, and with hearty simplicity, "I never shall care for any man, except Claud Daymer, and he's like a brother to me."

"Young ladies!" said Julia, suddenly brightening up, "I call you to order. I consider this conversation idle, vain, and frivolous. What good it is to do to you or me I don't know. And to change the subject, I beg to ask, Cornelia, if you are to sing that exquisite song, '*In questa tomba oscura*,' to-morrow night?"

"I believe I am. Oh, you should hear Claud sing it! He won't let me give it up to him; but you would never tolerate me, if you had first heard him in it! The pathos, the power, the passion of reproach and grief—I can't describe to you. Mrs. Stanford weeps over it. By the by, she bid me tell you not to be late to-morrow evening. Now, good-bye."

"Wait one minute, Cornelia; look here—excuse me, Julia, Mr. Darcy again! Here's a sketch Charles made one evening—don't you see? That's Mr. Darcy, his very self; and we all declare it's like you—the face is like you, Cornelia!"

"Like me! impossible," she answered, glancing at it, and then tying her bonnet. "Besides, I should not see it if it were; people don't see their own likenesses."

"It really *is* like," urged Mary; "Charles saw it at once, so did mama. And yet Mr. Darcy is not like you. It's quite odd.

"Be sure," said Julia, "you wear your white dress, and the chaplet of green leaves. Charles says you look best in that; and his taste is perfect, you know, in dress, and everything else. At least, I think so."

While the girls were talking about him, Mr. Darcy was leaning over the ship's side, on his way to England, by Marseilles. It was a splendid afternoon. The wind freshened a little, and they hoisted a sail, and were cutting rapidly through the blue Mediterranean. He thought of the bright land he was leaving, of the strange dull home he was going to—he thought of Cornelia, of the mysterious charm, the fascination she exercised so involuntarily over him. He felt a weary longing to see her again, a dreadful doubt whether he ever

should—he felt, as he had never felt before with regard to any human being, a desire to confide to her the circumstances of his life, to engage her sympathy, to rouse her interest. And then, as, after long trains of thought about Cornelia, was always the case, the image of his mother came to his soul; the mother, beloved, deplored, how deeply pitied! into her beautiful soft eyes bent on him he looked again; to his breast again he clasped the wasted but still fair form; on that cold marble forehead he pressed again his burning lips—and heard her low dying tones murmur again, "Kiss me, my son, my darling son." Oh, how vividly, how sadly rose these spectres of the past! He thought till he was almost exhausted; then, starting up, he joined the captain, who was pacing the deck, and began to talk to him.

On the morning of the next day, Claud was early at the Palazzo Teodor, and Mrs. Stanford was charmed with his attention, and with Cornelia's industry. Cornelia sang over her parts perfectly.

"Now, if you are not in a hurry, my dear Mr. Claud, let us have yours once more."

Claud was busy, but he literally *made* time to spend with them, so he stayed and sang. When he had concluded, and Cornelia had watched and listened to his enthusiasm till the same seemed to glow in her own breast, she said to him, "There is something wonderful in you, Claud; I never heard music like yours. Where you learnt it I don't know, but I believe you have been there—*là—su!*" and she smiled and pointed upwards, "and you have brought to us mortals some snatches of the harmony of the spheres!"

"Bravissimo, amici!" cried Mrs. Stanford, awaking out of her reverie, a state of abstraction which always followed her enjoyment of music; "most excellently sweet and beautiful! And now, Mr. Claud, my gran Signore, we will not detain you longer. But we shall expect you at eight."

"Yes, come in good time, do," said Cornelia; "you know I cannot do without you at all, Claud; I shall be longing for you to come."

Was not Claud happy, triumphantly happy, that night? From the moment when Cornelia, robed in her white dress and green chaplet, received him with smiles, till the moment they parted, when flushed with success, admiration and applause, her glowing cheeks and beaming eyes told him she was happy too. Yet their happiness was of a different kind—his was all centred in her; hers included him only in part, and separately.

One of the professional performers at this concert, a lady of high character, and not young, one of the most celebrated singers of the day, had begged to be especially introduced to Cornelia. She admired her appearance, and was greatly surprised, when expressing her admiration of her singing, to find she had not till very lately devoted herself to the study of music. She gave her great encouragement, expressed a wish that they should meet in England, whither she, too, was going, "and where," she said, with a very kind smile, "she was sure Miss D'Albert would distinguish herself." This idea of distinguishing herself had already presented itself to Cornelia's mind; the encouragement of Madame L—— flattered it, her own love of admiration, and of approbation too, fed the new-born flame. She was excited, animated, hopeful; answered with liveliness and grace; and Mrs. Stanford began to comprehend that her young companion was not only agreeable, useful, and clever, but handsome and fascinating. When the Smythes took their leave, they whispered to her of "Cornelia's success;" and Mr. Smythe added, "I never thought ill of my own picture till I watched her to-night. But her expression, her animation, her varying grace, had I attempted to paint it, would only have thrown me into despair."

CHAPTER X.

"A dream
Too flattering sweet to be substantial."
Shakspeare.

WHILE hope and pleasure seemed to wait upon and dance about Cornelia, Claud's happiness was fitful and uncertain. The time was drawing on for her departure; in a few days now they were to leave.

The evening after the concert, he sat alone in his two-chambered home in the Casa Taddolini. He had stolen an hour's leisure, and was occupied in composing an aria, as a parting gift to Cornelia.

The simple, clean, airy room, with its chief furniture of books and music, spoke at once the character of the occupant. He indulged in no luxuries, except those of his art—these, his fine instruments, and choice selection of music, he continually enjoyed. It was at once his business and his pleasure. There was at the same time, with this absence of all orna-

ment and mere luxury, something harmonious in the fitting-up of the room; everything was quiet and unobtrusive; a plain pearly-grey drapery hung about the window as a blind, and the light came through it, exquisitely softened—he might have chosen this simple thing, or not—there it was, and it seemed to chime in with the tone of everything else.

He finished the composition of his air—it was an Addio ! and then he went to the instrument, and accompanied himself with a few light thrilling touches while he sung it. His dark eye, and broad brow, with the hair thrown back; the pale complexion, and rather large expressive mouth, with a certain chiselled look of the face, not in itself handsome or regularly formed, and the slight figure, only about the middle height, and not well made, —would not have attracted admiration, except from those who understood the genius and the feeling that spoke in every gesture of the person, in the movement of the hands, in the play of lip and eye, in the changing hue of the cheek, and the varied yet consistent action of the whole form, obedient to the dictates of the soul.

These were all characteristic and peculiar; peculiar to genius, and to him.

The tenderness of the opening symphony swells gradually to the rich and more rapid movements of hope and rapture, as if communing with the beloved one, gazing upon her image, listening to her voice, and dwelling there, unwilling to leave—to part; but the Addio creeps on; the notes float softer, with a lingering cadence; again and again the Addio, passionate, earnest, pensive, loved—yet deplored, pants in the heart, and upon the lips,—"Addio, addio! beata, addio !"

There was nothing in this beautiful and simple song that he might not have given to Cornelia under any circumstances; graceful, chaste, refined, it was a fitting offering for a pure-minded woman; and yet Claud felt that, in giving her this now, he was revealing his inmost heart to her; to him it seemed so, because he knew that it was the embodiment of the deepest and fondest emotions of that heart,—but will she so receive it? He was to spend the last evening with them. He took the music, written out for her; whether he would give it to her, he had not decided,—whether to part from her now, and make no sign, he knew not. He left it to the hour, to the impulse, to favouring circumstance;—with deeper and holier faith, he left it to the direction of that purer spirit within him, which, after devout reflection, and earnest sacred committing of himself and her to the highest care, he knew would be strengthened for his aid.

He joined them, unable quite to hide the alternate hope, and fear, and pain, that agitated him. His physical temperament and constitution, delicate as the mental, felt all its variations. He had gone early, and there was no one in the room when he entered; he went to the piano, and there lay a handkerchief, and a spray of jessamine. He took up the flower, and hid it in his bosom; then beginning to play, he was cheered and soothed; and when Cornelia came in, leading her aged friend gently to her usual chair, he met them with his accustomed smile, and answered their welcome cheerfully.

"I dare say you will talk a great deal more than you will sing, to-night," said Mrs. Stanford; "and I must not be angry if you do. But we will have some music first, then tea, and then a chat."

"And I have a great deal of music to arrange; perhaps you will help me, Claud," Cornelia said.

"Shall we do that first?"

"No," she said, in a low voice; "Mrs. Stanford will like us to sing first."

"What shall we sing for you to-night, dearest madam?" he asked, going up to her, and handing her guitar to her. "You must accompany us, of course."

She smiled. "You are laughing at me, Mr. Claud!"

"You would not think so," he answered, "if you knew how I love the sight of that guitar, and reverence the hand that touches it. I wish, my dear Mrs. Stanford, I earnestly wish, I could express to you some small part, even, of my respectful affection for you, —my gratitude for all your kindness, so great, so undeserved !"

"Nonsense, Mr. Claud. You know very well I have tired you to death sometimes. Now, Cornelia, go on! What shall it be? Let me think :—I should like to hear you both sing, 'Ah non giunge'—the first song I heard your voice in. I give myself credit, Mr. Claud, for my prophecies on that occasion."

So the music went on for some time; and Mrs. Stanford fell into her usual reverie, and was silent. Cornelia's fingers were roaming in an involuntary voluntary over the piano,

and she said, "Our last evening!—I am so sorry, Claud!"

"Here is a little piece of new music for you,—for your especial self, Cornelia. Shall I sing it to you?"

"Oh, pray do!—thank you,—how kind!"

As he sang, the slight tremor in his voice added to its pathos. When he concluded, he pressed his hand for a few moments to his throbbing temples; then, turning to Cornelia, "Will you accept it?" he said. He looked up, and saw that her eyes were full of tears, even brimming over,—those dark lustrous eyes.

"Did you write it for me, Claud?" she asked.

"For you alone! Say you will take it,—that you will think of me when you sing it,—that you will——"

She took the music, and two large tears dropped heavily on the paper. "Yes, I will not forget," she began——

"What was that, my dear?" cried Mrs. Stanford. "I never heard it before;—'most musical, most melancholy!'"

"A new composition of Claud's," replied Cornelia.

A double interruption, in the shape of tea, now appeared; and, in the course of it, a sudden thought struck the old lady. They had persuaded Miss D'Albert to accompany them as far as Paris, on her way to England; and Mrs. Stanford, who was always most precise in every arrangement, recollected that she had not particularly named the hour of meeting and starting next day.

"I must send there directly, Cornelia."

"Such a beautiful evening, why should not I go myself?" Cornelia proposed.

"Yes; it is not late. Mr. Claud will go with you; make haste and finish your tea."

It was not far; but Claud wished it were miles.

"You must not be long," continued Mrs. Stanford; "I must have a parting song from Mr. Claud."

In a very short time they were on their way, crossing the beautiful Ponte Santa Trinita,—moonlight and dying daylight contending in the sky. They walked on, almost in silence; Claud's heart was full; he felt he had so much to say he could say nothing.

"Do you think I shall like England, Claud?"

"Yes, I am sure you will. I should like to be going too, to see your first impressions. But your life has been so much that of an Englishwoman, there will be little new in your experience; it will only be things, not people, that will be strange to you."

"The skies duller, the people graver, and so forth."

"Yes, Cornelia; but if you are happy, you will make brightness for yourself. In Italy the skies may look dull, and the people grave."

"Yes, you are grave yourself sometimes. But these skies—these beautiful skies, they can never be anything but bright, glorious, exquisite!" she said, and looked up—his gaze followed hers.

"They will be dull to me when you are gone," he said.

"Nay, don't let us be melancholy on our last evening; I should like a pleasant remembrance of it. You are quite sentimental to-day, Claud! Here we are at aunty's."

"An unexpected pleasure, my dears," she cried. "Good evening to you. Claud, you look quite tired. Sit down to rest. Sit down, Cornelia."

"Oh, it's so very far," said Cornelia, laughing, "we are really quite exhausted! we shall never get back again. I will tell you a little *segreto*, aunty,—Claud is going to mope when we are gone, and he doesn't like the prospect of it!"

"You are merry to-night, child;" and Miss D'Albert smiled on her dear Cornelia, though she glanced anxiously at Claud the next moment. "I see how it is," she thought, "Cornelia does not."

They did not stay many minutes, but having made the requisite arrangements hastened away.

They lingered on the bridge. "Such a night," said Claud, "let us enjoy it a few moments,"—she paused—"and tell me, Cornelia, my sweet Cornelia, will you think of me when we are far apart?"

"Yes, Claud, very often, I am sure I shall."

"Let it be kindly, as I shall think of you—kindly!—oh, more than kindly!—let me be to you——"

"What!" she said, unconscious of his agitation, "am I not almost your sister, Claud?"

She raised her eyes to his face; it was pale as death.

"Claud! What is the matter? Speak—can I do anything for you?"

"Anything? Everything, Cornelia! You have shown me a sister's regard, a sister's

kindness—but I, presumptuous, daring, dissatisfied, would ask you for more. There is a love that 'sticketh closer than a brother's' —such is mine for you—and such—such would I ask from you in return!"

She leaned against the battlement of the bridge, and turned away—a sudden sickness came over her, a sudden sorrow and pain.

"Speak to me, Cornelia!"

"Oh! why do you ask me?"

"You bade me," he answered, in a voice of despair.

"Claud!" she exclaimed, rousing herself, "Claud, I would rather die than give you pain. You must know that. I would die this moment. if by that I could hide from you the truth—but I cannot—and I dare not speak false to you. Claud! I have not in my heart that love for you. I have neither for you, nor for any human being, that feeling you speak of—your regard, your friendship, your kindness, give me pleasure—but now you pain me—pain me inexpressibly! Oh Claud! forgive me—don't look so wretched." She burst into tears. He took her hand and put it under his arm again, and led her on.

"Be comforted. Forget what has passed. You have acted as becomes you, Cornelia, with candour, with feeling; I ask no more. I am answered, and I thank you—deeply thank you."

He held her hand in his a few moments; she did not withdraw it from his trembling pressure, but she walked on quickly, and both were silent.

When they reached Mrs. Stanford's door, he would have given worlds to go home from there; for to spend the rest of the evening in the presence of Cornelia, to sing to Mrs. Stanford, he felt was almost impossible. But Claud had a strong mind, a vigorous will; he went in, he fulfilled his duty, he sang, he bade them farewell, pleading a special engagement which would prevent his seeing them in the morning; he was apparently less embarrassed than Cornelia, who excused herself from singing any more, and whose quick tears were swimming in her eyes all the time; but when it was over, when, after hurrying home, he entered his own little room, he did not even reach his chair—he sunk down fainting on the floor—power of endurance, overstrained, intense, could last no longer. He lay there till the early dawn of morning awoke him from his trance, and to a sense of that despair, the possibility of which he had imagined, but the reality of which seemed to have fallen upon him in all its dreadful unanticipated gloom.

On his bed, where he threw himself at last, not to sleep, but to think and resolve, he passed through that ordeal every dutiful and struggling mind must pass through, when assailed by a great trial. He came forth from it calmer, stronger, more closely bound to that firm staff on which he had ever leaned —his dependence upon God. A second time, that on which his heart's love was placed was removed from him—no longer his. His mother, his long-cherished treasure, he had given her up—and he bowed to the command, obedient;—here, there was a spirit less resigned—a spirit that would have rebelled; he conquered it—"it rent him sore, and came out of him"—he stood purified, free before his God, and asked Him of His will, that he might do it.

And verily he had his reward; in the clear view of that duty wherein his path lay, in strength and calmness of spirit, in hope of ultimate and endless peace, in deeper knowledge of his own soul, and of the sources of grace and consolation.

He suffered much, at first, from the great reaction of his feelings with regard to his profession. Still devoted to his art, there was now a stimulus withdrawn, which for months past had made the daily and hourly exercise of it, the labour, the mere plodding teaching, an excitement and delight; now the teaching was irksome, annoying, wearisome in the extreme; his pupils seemed changed, to be dull, or careless, or hasty—to give him trouble and anxiety he never had before. Outward things seemed to have changed. Claud sighed; but he knew how it was, and he plodded on.

In the meantime Mrs. Stanford, Cornelia, and Miss D'Albert pursued their pleasant route towards England. They travelled by land all the way, and stayed wherever they chose. For a few days they lingered about Spezia, and its beautiful bay; for a week they sojourned at Genoa. The season, rich and glowing, and not too far advanced, was most favourable for their journey, and Cornelia, to whom so much was new, was delighted with all she saw. She had left Florence, saddened by her kind thoughts of Claud, and uneasy on his account, for his pale face and agitated manner haunted her afterwards. They found some music of his before they left, and Cornelia returned it,

with a few kind words written in haste, but ending, "Adieu, dear Claud! we shall often think of you." And soon the change of scene, and the new thoughts it brought, without causing her to forget, softened all sad impressions; and as her spirits revived, they became fainter and fainter, and she remembered Claud again, only as the kind friend and cheerful teacher.

"He will not care so much for me when I am gone," she used to say to herself. "Mrs. Stanford will be sending him a letter from England, and we will try to cheer him and amuse him. Claud is too easily affected—too soon depressed, and he thought a great deal better of me than I deserved." Yet his absence made a difference to her, she could not tell how, but there was a blank unfilled, and the thoughts of her music, and the continued cultivation of it, seemed divested of much of its interest. "I shall want you, Claud, after all!"

But Cornelia would have been quite happy, save for the oft-recurring question about herself—her position—her very being,—"whence I came, and whose I am, or was." The thick cloud of mystery into which her mind looked for answer seemed to repel her further seeking, and to darken as she gazed into it. She found she could elicit nothing further from Miss D'Albert, and she endeavoured to be content and grateful, and to dismiss distrust and doubt.

One night at Spezia, as they were sitting after tea, a beverage the old lady delighted in, and found very enlivening, she desired Cornelia to bring her guitar, which was always carried about with them. Just at this moment a band struck up, from below, a serenade. The window was open, and the air tranquil.

"This is charming!" said Cornelia.

"Very good, indeed," said Mrs. Stanford, in a slow critical tone. "Hark! the little Mandolin is the best of all. Yes, very pretty and pleasant."

After the band had played some time, and they stopped—"Now, Cornelia! we will pay them in their own coin. Sing, my girl, sing, and I will play."

She gave the air, and Cornelia sung. "Ah!" she exclaimed fondly, "*this* is music—again, Cornelia!"

"*Viva, Viva! bravissimo!*" cried voices from below. "*Bravissimo! chi è? Ancora! ancora!*"

"Go on," said Mrs. Stanford—"let us give them another, that barcarole." She struck her guitar, and they went on.

Then the enthusiasm of the listeners knew no bounds; two of them climbed up upon the balcony, and looked in, and bright lights were burning in the room.

"Eh! che bella! che bella cantatrice! e che donna vecchia graziosa!"

Mrs. Stanford ceased to play, and addressing them said, "We were very willing, friends, to give you our music for yours; and we are glad it pleases you." They thanked her with the greatest respect and politeness, and praised her music rapturously. One of the young men fixed his dark eyes upon Cornelia with an expression of undisguised admiration, yet there was no rudeness or familiarity in the look; his own face, too, was very handsome; and Miss D'Albert, looking earnestly at him, whispered, "I am sure, Cornelia, I have seen that face before; or one very like it. Who, or where, can it have been? Hah! I recollect; he is like the child Felice."

"Is it possible, then? Yes, it may be! it may be the lost son they talked about! let us inquire."

Miss D'Albert addressed him, and they had a long conversation. He proved to be the very same; he had been to France and to England, and was returning to his family; for he had succeeded well, and had saved some of his earnings. He was a merry fellow, with a fine expressive face and splendid voice; they gave him their best wishes, and Mrs. Stanford added her generous donation to his little store. He thanked her gracefully. "You will not see in England, Cornelia," said Miss D'Albert, "this graceful and polished manner among the lower classes—it is peculiar to Italy."

"Descend, Messer Giovanni," cried the others from below, "let us give them our best music."

They played with all their heart and soul. They would have played all night. But Mrs. Stanford retired to rest, first despatching a liberal present to the band in general.

This pleasant little incident was talked over by Cornelia and Miss D'Albert, and the joy of Felice and her mother pictured over and over again.

Next morning, as they drove out of Spezia, Giovanni presented himself for a moment; he threw some flowers into the carriage, and dropped into Cornelia's lap a little chain made of shells which he had picked up on the

shore and strung together, saying, "Here, a string of beads for the Signorina, and every one a prayer for her."

She looked out and waved a kind Addio, and there Giovanni still stood gazing after the carriage, as it drove along.

Then they went on to Genoa. Cornelia was enchanted with the city, and its situation —the view of it especially which they first had, from that part of the road where the opening of a gallery in the rock forms a frame work to the beautiful distance. How often she deplored the blindness of her dear companion! How often she checked herself, when an eager exclamation about the exquisite prospect might have recalled to her her loss! Mrs. Stanford never complained. Her patience was angelic; her temper, though quick and passionate, was never fretful; and, except on one subject, she was gentleness itself.

"I wonder if there is anything so pretty as this in England," thought Cornelia, as she wandered through a grove-like garden in the south of France, and gathered some orange blossoms, and camellias, for Mrs. Stanford. "Tell me, dear Mrs. Stanford," she said, when they went in, "about the place we are going to, your house, the Priory—is it anything like what I have been accustomed to see in Italy?"

"Quite different. Some would say, far less beautiful, but to me familiar associations make the charm of a place—a home; the home I am going to is so filled with vivid remembrances of the past, that I can scarcely describe its outward features to you, or imagine how it would appear to a new eye, to one who can see no loved image haunting its shades, and hear no well-known voice on its air. Still I think you will admire it. It is a very cheerful place, though secluded, in a fine open picturesque situation on the brow of a hill. The house used to be buried in woods, for my grandfather would never allow the timber to be cut, partly from prejudice, and partly from a real love of seclusion. So the fine trees were allowed to injure each other, and fight it out as they could; and hundreds have stood it and braved all impediments, and stand there like hardy veterans, as fine timber as you can see in England. So at least they were, when last I could see them. The house is of grey stone, a low long building, anciently, they say, a Priory. One long corridor is still lighted by the high narrow lancet windows, in which some of the painted glass is preserved. Large windows with heavy stone mullions, beneath which birds build, and ivy and clematis twine, light the principal rooms, which are lofty, (having no story above,) and, though all panelled with dark oak, they are very cheerful. You step out from the library on to a broad gravel, and flower-garden, with its pool of water lilies, and splashing fountain; the whole is raised, not exactly as a terrace, but a little above the park ground beyond, from which it is separated by a massive stone balustrade. On your right, looking from the library, which is the centre window of the suite, is a long wall, covered with roses; and, through this, a door leads into the fruit garden—that door on the steps of which, fifty years ago, I first met my husband!—to the left, a few of those fine old trees I have mentioned stand on a grassy glade, an open lawn sloping to the park, which sweeps away into the valley, watered by a fine broad winding river, in character, though on a smaller scale, much like the Thames. We are not very far from the sea. Behind the house is a wilderness of wood, and tangled cover, where on an October morning you may see the red coats of English sportsmen, and hear the baying of the hounds when they start the fox. It is quite English. Do you think you can imagine it now?"

"Oh yes!" said Cornelia; "and how new and pleasant and pretty it will be! when shall we arrive there?"

"We must have patience; not for a month at least. There is one part of the house which has been shut up for a long time. I will tell you about it. There was a chapel in it once, and an underground chamber, which had been put to no particular use, till during the early part of the reign of James the First, when it was the resort of the family at certain periods to celebrate in secret the rites of the Roman Catholic faith, of which they had long been staunch professors. These were not my ancestors. The only son of the then proprietor fell at the battle of Naseby, and the estate afterwards came into new hands. The chapel fell almost to ruin; and any communication between it and the rest of the house, in its dilapidated state, was useless. So it remained shut up. When I was very young, too young to remember anything about it, an old man who had lived more than sixty years in the family was missed; he had long been melancholy and wandering, but was kept on and indulged, and was a great favourite with my father, and with young people, a harm-

less kind old soul. Search and inquiry were all in vain—poor Isaac was not to be found. Two years afterwards, when from mere curiosity some gentlemen went into the chamber under the chapel, his skeleton was discovered there, lying in a corner; he must have starved himself to death—but the horrible mystery which has hung about it, especially among the country people, who say he was murdered, has now effectually prevented any entrance whatever into that part, and I don't think there is a creature in the whole neighbourhood, man, woman, or child, who would dare to go there by night or by day. I have always wished to repair the chapel, and have service in it, but the parish church is near—and then, with the early ruin of my own happiness, all my spirit for improvement and renovation passed away."

"I am sure," said Cornelia, "I shall go and see everything, especially the old chapel."

Before they reached the end of this pleasant and prosperous journey, an incident occurred which upset Mrs. Stanford's equanimity, and might have thrown Cornelia into fresh difficulties.

They had arrived at Boulogne, and had been detained there by a slight indisposition of the old lady.

As Cornelia was looking from the window of the hotel one day, she was startled by seeing Mr. Darcy. He was talking to two gentlemen on the steps. Surprised and vexed, and fearing he might have seen her, she drew back; but he did not see her, nor was he aware that Mrs. Stanford was at Boulogne. Cornelia was sure he was not in the house they were in, for Mrs. Stanford always made her read over aloud a list of the arrivals at every hotel they went to; and, as it was now fixed that they were to leave in two days, she hoped not to see him again, and said not a word about it to Mrs. Stanford.

Next day, however, the old lady said she was much better, and wished to go out. Cornelia endeavoured to dissuade her, but she persisted,—"she had not often an opportunity of getting a sea breeze;" so they went. It was a fine day, and there were many people out.

"What crowds of footsteps I hear!" said Mrs. Stanford, "all strange to me,—some hurrying, some lingering, some pacing steadily along. We blind become conversant with these signs, which are like a language to us. A footstep, as a voice, speaks much to me of the character of the person. From the first, when I heard yours, I guessed your disposition; your footstep is light and bounding, often hurried and impatient, seldom calm, never sedate. Sometimes, when thou art very happy, it is half wild."

Cornelia laughed.

"Listen, child, to those two boys quarrelling,—more than two, are there not?"

"Yes, three—four," said Cornelia.

"How droll they are! What is it they are selling?—shells, do they say?"

"Yes; and one seems to be master of the company, and holds the tray, and the three others are squabbling for a fair share of the honours."

"Let us go and talk to them. So! my merry men, what are you fighting about? What have you got to sell?"

"Shells!" cried the four boys, at once.

"Hold your tongues," said the foremost. "At your service, madame."

"What!" said the old lady, "are you all partners in one concern?"

"We ought to be," cried two of the boys, "for we all gathered the shells."

"What will you take for your stock in trade?" she asked.

"Two francs," replied the holder of the tray, with dignity.

"Two francs!" screamed the rest; "madame, at the least four!"

Whereupon a warm discussion commenced as to the value of their property.

"I can't buy up a whole concern, unless the partners agree," rejoined Mrs. Stanford, laughing; "so, good day to you." She threw them two francs, bidding them divide it amicably, and she and Cornelia turned away.

By this time several people had come up, and were listening, and laughing at the boys; and the first person that met Cornelia's eyes, as she turned, was Mr. Darcy. He recognised them with a start of surprise and pleasure, but merely bowed, and did not speak.

"It is getting chill," she said to Mrs. Stanford; "had you not better go in?"

"Yes, and I am very tired; I have exerted myself too much, standing talking to those foolish children; but they amused me. Let us go home."

They walked on towards the hotel.

"It is almost cold," continued Mrs. Stanford, "and yet I feel faint. Is there no place where we can rest?"

"No, indeed," said Cornelia, looking round.

"Oh! Cornelia, something is amiss; my head swims—I am sick, faint——" She tottered forward, sunk from Cornelia's arm and hasty clasp, and fell heavily to the ground.

Surprised and frightened, Cornelia endeavoured to raise her, but in vain; she was insensible, and her weight was great. "What shall I do?" she said to herself, looking round.

Several people came running up, but the first, the one who instantly met and answered her seeking eyes, was Mr. Darcy. She motioned him back impatiently, and addressed another person near her. But he was not to be repulsed; with resolution and kindness he made his way to her, and, with the assistance of another person, he raised Mrs. Stanford in his arms, and, to Cornelia's terror, carried her off to the hotel. It was a short distance, but Cornelia dreaded every moment that she might revive, and discover by whom she was assisted. She continued, however, quite senseless, and Darcy placed her in safety on a couch in the first room they could enter, and then silently motioned Cornelia from the room.

He only said, "I will send a physician directly; tell me if I can do anything more."

"No, no," she replied; "and be quick, pray!"

He was gone.

"How very kind he is!" she thought, as she hastened back to Mrs. Stanford.

She, poor old lady, was not so easily revived as Cornelia imagined she might be. She lay for more than half an hour in this state, and it was succeeded by an accession of illness, and great prostration of strength. The doctors enjoined perfect quietness, and the absence of all excitement, and their stay at Boulogne was now prolonged for three weeks, the former indisposition having been but a prelude to this more serious attack. During a great part of this time, Mr. Darcy had also remained, and frequently made inquiries after Mrs. Stanford, sometimes from Janet, and sometimes from the courier, whom he met constantly about. At last he left. He had never met Cornelia again, or had any opportunity of seeking communication with her. Her whole time was occupied with Mrs. Stanford; and, for herself, she did not regret her detention in doors.

"We shall never get home at this rate," said Mrs. Stanford, one evening, weary and depressed.

"We must have patience, as you once said to me," replied her companion; "in another week, perhaps——"

"Yes, yes, we shall see. But you have never told me all about it. I must have frightened you sadly, child, when I was taken ill. What did you do?—who helped you? Do tell me all about it; it will amuse me to hear. Tell me everything, like a good girl. You were alarmed, I dare say; I am sorry I frightened you. Who helped you?"

"Many good people were near," she rereplied, "who would have assisted us. One was very kind, a gentleman, who took you up, and carried you in his arms to the hotel."

"Really! that was very good of him. I am truly obliged, and wish I may have an opportunity of assuring him I feel it. Do you know who he is? Has he made any inquiry since? Do you know him?"

"Yes, he was the only person I did know; but I did not ask his assistance. He insisted on giving it, and it was done in the kindest and least intrusive manner possible."

"Well, child, who was it? Do tell me?"

"May I tell you, dear lady?—It was Mr. Darcy!"

"Don't joke with me, Cornelia, don't!" A visible shudder passed over her frame. "Mind what you do."

"I do not joke," said Cornelia; "it was he, indeed."

"Not he who touched me—raised me—helped me! No—you would not have permitted it. It could not be he. He! no—his touch would have aroused me to consciousness, or killed me at once."

Cornelia was silent. She was sorry she had mentioned it. But Mrs. Stanford was not satisfied.

"*He* put his arms about me, and carry me!—*he* protect me—what? *he!* Oh, my son, my beloved, my sainted son, where was thy spirit, to save me this indignity?" Tears of grief and anger rolled down her face.

"Let me assure you, my dearest lady," urged Cornelia, earnestly, "I have never seen Mr. Darcy since. Believe me, I would not offend you; I would not hurt these tried and sensitive feelings, which I respect too much to trifle with; I am so sorry."

"I can never trust you again; I said so before—I know it now."

"And think for a moment, my dear, dear madam; could he have done less, at such a moment, than assist us? Consider the circumstances; and, oh! consider, too—forgive

my alluding to it—he is, perhaps, not the one least injured in that mournful story."

"Do you plead for him? be silent, Cornelia!—for him, the one man in all this world of whom I entertain the meanest opinion—for whom I feel the lowest contempt! Say no more; you make me ill—worse. Oh, my poor head! What have you done, Cornelia! I am ill—ill!"

Cornelia, in the tenderest manner, endeavoured to soothe and administer to her; the pain in the head, always consequent on excitement or agitation, was violent. The physician saw, at once, the cause of the relapse, and urged on Cornelia stricter caution. She inwardly resolved, from this time, whatever it might cost her, never to mention Mr. Darcy's name again. She had done so, in this instance, from her desire not to conceal anything from Mrs. Stanford; and, seeing it productive of such results, she made up her mind to a course of entire reserve in future, should they meet again.

Mrs. Stanford, however, had become too fond of her to retain her anger long. She felt, too, though she would never have confessed it, that there was perhaps some little truth in the remark, "he was not the least injured person." After some coldness, and a good deal of scolding about various things, and a great deal of suffering on her own part, matters seemed to be adjusted once more. She recovered sufficiently to travel, so the journey was at last resumed; and one fine afternoon, the end of August, Cornelia found herself looking out of the beautiful large window in the oak library at the Priory.

"I think," she wrote, some days afterwards, to Miss D'Albert (whom they had left in Paris), "England is exactly what the English word *pleasant* describes; I seem to have learnt its real meaning since I came here. There is something fresh in the air of this place—fresh, secluded, and yet cheerful. Certainly, it looks a small country, after that we have left; no magnificent wide-spreading plains, like those of rich Tuscany—no great hills with snowy summits or blue ridges, stretching far away; and the buildings—those I have seen as yet, look insignificant and poor. But I have not been to London; we are not to go till after Christmas. Everything here looks cared for, and well kept; the turf you walk on is smooth as velvet; the gardens exquisitely ordered; and in the house everything is *comfortable*—that is another word of which you only discover the true meaning in England. The space of our Italian rooms is, in this house, combined with many comforts we had not; but, perhaps, we never missed them—nay, I'm sure I never did. Aunty, if you hear anything from Claud, tell me. I think, not seldom, of the bright skies, the beautiful music, the flowery land, we have left."

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Darcy, too, had reached England. He went home; that is, to such a home as he could make in his father's house. The old man's health had been failing for some time; he was churlish and unsociable, relied for attendance, and almost companionship, on a faithful and now aged servant, whose devotion to his service had in it something of benevolence and kindness seldom met with in such instances, where the service had been ill requited, and met by an exacting temper.

The father and son were not congenial companions; but the house in London was about as convenient to Mr. Darcy as lodgings would have been. So he stayed there; and sometimes they dined together—not often, for Mr. Darcy was frequently out.

Soon after his arrival, he called on Mr. Herries, now a barrister of high standing and fortune, at whose house he met a very pleasant circle; among them Sir Lawton Herries, the eldest brother, to whose place in the country he was invited this autumn, and where he chanced to meet an old acquaintance.

It was now the month of October. Time had passed quietly and quickly with Mrs. Stanford and Cornelia. Her beloved guitar, and Cornelia's music in the evenings, were sufficient amusement for the old lady. The young one had explored every nook and corner of the Priory—the haunted chapel, and the more distant woods; she enjoyed the country, the free life, the novelty of her rural home; and she was happy. Dreams of ambition were sleeping; they woke now and then, and stirred her spirit; but the calm influences of nature, and the repose of her present life, laid them again to rest. Still she went on sedulously studying, and improving her musical powers; from whatever motive, she was now urged to a diligence and perseverance which, had Miss D'Albert witnessed, she would have wondered at, and approved. They were to go to town in January; and, in the meantime, they saw very little company at the Priory. Cornelia used to

drive Mrs. Stanford out in the park and lanes, in her little pony-chair; and one fine October day they were enjoying the almost summer air, and Cornelia was describing to Mrs. Stanford the exquisite colouring on the woods, when a party on horseback appeared in the long vista of a bowery lane.

"The beech-trees are perfectly golden, and the sun is shining brightly on their fine old grey trunks, but who can those be? One, two, ladies on horseback, and some gentlemen; the first party I have seen on horseback—yet, except——"

"Who can they be?" said the old lady. "Oh, I recollect; Sir Lawton Herries was to have friends with him at Dursley, about this time."

"Five, six people, booted and spurred—lords and ladies gay—gallantly mounted," said Cornelia.

Mrs. Stanford desired her servant to tell her if Sir Lawton or Mr. Herries were of the party; "in that case," she added, "you will draw up, Cornelia."

They drew up. Sir Lawton rode first, with a young lady, a stranger. He was a bachelor—a very gentlemanly person, precise and calm, even to formality, with hair nearly white; perfectly well appointed as to dress, and mounted on his park hack. The lady was very young—a laughing little Hebe, with bright brown eyes, and hair floating on the soft wind off her fair round cheeks; she was riding a small thorough-bred horse, full of spirit, like herself; he was restless and impatient.

"Sir Lawton, I am happy to meet you," said Mrs. Stanford.

"This is indeed an unexpected and great pleasure, my dear madam," Sir Lawton began. "Miss Douglas, one moment's pause, if you please," laying his hand on her rein—"I need not say what pleasure it gives me to see you again." At this instant an exclamation of delight and surprise interrupted them.

"Cornelia!"

"It is—really! it is Julia Smythe!" cried Cornelia; and Julia rode up, greatly to the discomposure of Sir Lawton, and of Miss Douglas's horse.

"We must shake hands—how charming!"

"Where are you? When did you come, and how?—"What brought you, and who are you with?—dear! how surprised I am," was all Cornelia could say, amid the bustle.

"I came to England, to my cousin's marriage; and we are staying at Dursley; it is not very far from the Priory; we must meet again."

"I must beg your pardon, my dear Mrs. Stanford," Sir Lawton was saying; "but, indeed, Miss Douglas and her horse are quite too well matched; I cannot keep them quiet. Will you not drive over to Dursley and visit us?"

Miss Douglas laughed gaily, and begging him to release her horse, which fretted in his hold, she rode into the rear of the party.

"Do let us see you," he repeated, "if you feel able."

"Ah, I never go out, you know. But you will come and see me. Come and take luncheon with me, to-morrow. Miss D'Albert, I hear, has found a friend. You must all come."

She greeted Julia kindly; and they, with Sir Lawton, arranged a meeting for next day.

"How pretty Julia looked!" said Cornelia, as the party passed on, and she followed with her eyes the graceful equestrian: "how elegant her figure looks; and how easy her carriage! I should like to ride on horseback, I think."

"You are much safer as you are, my dear. Pray, Cornelia, be so good as to describe Miss Julia Smythe to me. I form my idea of a person's appearance chiefly from the voice. Hers is very pleasant, and I imagine——"

"Describe her then to me, dear Mrs. Stanford. Your mental eye may be as true as my bodily one."

"Well then—she has a tall slight figure, not so tall as yours, nor nearly so full (her voice has not the tone and musical depth and largeness of yours). Her head is small, the form elegant, the features finely cut, the complexion tender; there is less power than beauty, more grace than vivacity; and with her mind, perhaps, it is the same—she has more of feeling than thought. Am I right?"

"Your outline is perfect as a portrait. I will fill it up and add a little. She has an expressive animated eye, a varying colour that comes and goes with the varying emotions of her heart—her good, gentle, tender, heart! And the movements of her figure are bending, soft; the lines are flowing and harmonious."

"Exactly as I fancied it. She must be an attractive creature. One of those whom 'tis so pleasant to love—like loving the spring-time."

"They say," said Cornelia, "that youth

loves best the contemplative and sentimental —the autumn-like repose in life and nature; and that in age we turn again to spring, to refresh the faded vision and tired heart. Do you think it is so? I myself, as yet, love autumn best—these golden tints and glorious gleams—and the thoughtful, eager, passionate, deep things of life—not the fresh, green, unfolded, crude young buds, and uncertain sunshine, and fitful weather."

"Yes, this is all natural to you now, Cornelia, but you will live to find a purer pleasure in the spring—to say—

'The nearer as we draw to Life's dark goal,
Be hopeful Spring the favourite of the soul.'

Often as I sat in my blindness, on a spring day, after my great and grievous loss, the sweet air seemed to bring back to my ear the voice of my son, the young, the hopeful, the joyous; a voice of love that soothed me, and told me that among the living he still dwelt, the living spirits of the blessed in a holier world. And in such moments I have said, 'Ay! better there than here! for this world was not worthy of thee!' And the distance seemed to shorten between us, the deep silence of absence to be broken, the dark shades to fly before the wide broad light of faith. Oh, Cornelia! at those moments surely he has been near to me; we were no longer parted!"

"I lost one I loved," Cornelia said, after a long pause, during which she laid the reins on her knee, and let the pony walk quietly along the turfy silent lane. "I thought then, none ever suffered as I did. To look back on the time now, is like remembering a wild fearful dream, except that all was real – dreadfully real! And I never felt the consolations you mention. I never heard the voice of *my* dearest friend speaking to me as you describe, I wish I could! blessed, blessed would it have been! Between that time and this, with regard to him, the time seems a chaos, a dark impenetrable distance—a separation entire, as if happiness with him were a thing gone, lost for ever and for ever. God forgive me, I have cherished neither Faith nor Hope, but a dull and cold Despair."

Tears rolled fast down her face, and fell into her lap as she bent down her head.

"Grieve, then, rather for this, Cornelia, than for him. Think you that this world would have made him happier than his God doth make him now? Think you that the good leave us here, to find no better work above? Ah, child! deeply as I have suffered, I rejoice with a joy unspeakable that my beloved, once a mortal and dying creature, wears the robes of an angel, and the glory of the immortal."

"Teach me to think as you do," said Cornelia, laying her hand on Mrs. Stanford's.

"Hasten now, my dear, we have loitered long enough. I feel the great drops, it will be a thunder storm. Let us get home."

They drove on quickly, but the transient shower soon passed, and again Cornelia lingered as they passed through the park.

"Never was a spring glorious as this autumn!" she exclaimed; "from this air, as from a person's voice, I can imagine you, dear Mrs. Stanford, picturing to your mind's eye the beauty of nature. Shall I tell you what I see? This avenue of limes, pale gold and green, and the sunny glades stretching away into the woods and thickets where a thousand rich colours are blended; the russet brown of the chestnut, reminding me of Italy, with the purple shaded hawthorn like England only, and the bright clear green of some oak trees yet unfaded. Oh, how I wish——"

Cornelia stopped; she was going to say, "how I wish you could see it"—she felt that Mrs. Stanford possessed, in her almost divine patience, a higher blessing than the physical power she had lost could ever have brought.

"You enjoy England," Mrs. Stanford said.

"Yes, I wish I were, perhaps I am, an Englishwoman," Cornelia said, half to herself. "I don't know——"

"You don't know, child?"

"No."

"That seems strange." She said no more then, but in the evening, between the pauses of their music when she laid down her guitar, she said, "Cornelia, did you never know father or mother?"

"I do not remember them; I have not the faintest recollection of either parent."

"That only draws thee closer to me, then. It was the same with me, orphaned from infancy."

The next day a party from Dursley, including Mr. Herries and Julia Smythe, lunched at the Priory, and spent the afternoon. Cornelia and her friend took a walk together.

"Did you see my cousin, Flora Douglas? It is to her marriage I am come," Julia said. "Mamma at first would not hear of it, but Charles begged; and I am so delighted to see old England again. Don't you like it, Cornelia?"

"Oh yes, yes; but I like, too, to see your

face, because it seems to bring me something from Florence. I think of Florence with great pleasure, Julia; sometimes, too, with a kind of sadness. I don't think I appreciated, when I was there, many things which made me happy. But this is a lesson we have to learn the longer we live."

"You are growing grave and philosophic, Cornelia!"

"I think more than I used to think," she replied; "but I am not the less happy for that. I should rather say I am much less unhappy."

"Let me look at you, Cornelia! ah, those eyes are as bright as ever, and your cheek just as brown, and rich and clear. Were you ever unhappy? I don't believe you! By the by, how does the music go on? We did not see Mr. Daymer so often after you left."

"The music goes on progressively. Tell me about Claud Daymer. Was he quite well?"

"No, indeed, he looked ill and out of spirits. I think he missed you and Mrs. Stanford very much."

"He never writes," said Cornelia, thoughtfully.

"I suppose I shall see him before very long, for I am to go back with my cousins when they go to Italy; that will be before Christmas. You must send him a message by me. What shall I say for you?"

"Oh, nothing at all, thank you. I've no message to send."

"Well, I'll tell him you had nothing to say to him."

"Dear Julia, don't be silly. Tell me about your cousin—that beautiful girl, almost child, I saw on horseback yesterday; was she the Miss Douglas?"

"Only just now you asked me to tell you about Mr. Daymer! and now you fly off to Miss Douglas. Well, she is a child—it is a child's marriage; but they are pretty children both of them, and it will be a pretty sight. You must come. Sir Lawton is going to ask Mrs. Stanford to spare you for a few days, the end of this week. Friday is the wedding-day."

"I should be delighted to come. Let us go in now, and perhaps we may find it settled."

And so they did. Mrs. Stanford was most kind and indulgent, and agreed that Cornelia should go to Dursley on Thursday, to stay till the following Monday.

"Bring a great deal of music, and let us have some singing," said Julia. "It will remind us of Florence and Mr. Daymer."

"Ah! our good Mr. Claud! I wish he were here," said Mrs. Stanford. "Cornelia, my dear," as the party left, "give me the guitar."

The day Cornelia came, Julia was sitting in the library, half thinking and half asleep over the fire, and Mr. Herries was standing in the window looking over the newspaper, when the door opened, and a servant announced "Mr. Darcy."

"I had quite forgotten to tell you we expected Mr. Darcy, Miss Smythe. I believe you know him."

Julia jumped up, wide awake. "Mr. Darcy! how odd!" she said to herself, as he came in; and her cheeks flushed a bright crimson, that died away almost to white. He, too, looked surprised and pleased. "I did not know I should have the pleasure of meeting Miss Smythe!"

"I believe you are old acquaintances," said Mr. Herries.

"I hope Miss Smythe will let me say old friends," said Mr. Darcy, with the peculiar soft and pleasing smile which sometimes lighted up his grave face.

"But it is time to dress," Mr. Herries remarked, taking out his watch.

"I had no idea it was so late!" Julia cried, running away.

As she passed through the hall, Cornelia was just coming in, and the servant was conducting her to the library.

"Here you are, my dear Cornelia! I am so glad; but don't go there, there is nobody, —that is—there is—Come with me. Oh, Cornelia! I am so faint—I feel so strangely!"

She pulled Cornelia along, till they got into her room, and there Julia sank on a chair, panting.

"My dear Julia, what in the world ails you?"

"Why, I don't know, we have been riding such miles to-day, and that mare pulls my arm off. And just as I was resting in the library, who should come in, do you think? but—now only do guess!"

"Some very unpleasant person, to put you into such a fuss, my dear!"

"Mr. Darcy!"

"And does that distress you?" Cornelia smiled, and looked earnestly at Julia, into whose cheeks again rushed the ready blushes. "It ought rather to distress me," she added. "Is he come to stay here, Julia?"

"I don't know indeed," she replied, rising,

and recovering herself: "how very silly I am! I am so soon tired now, I think I can't have been well lately." She drank some cold water; "but now I am all right again."

"What would Mrs. Stanford say to my coming here, to meet Mr. Darcy? This is awkward, Julia."

"Oh, never mind! You need say nothing about it. *I* knew nothing of his coming. It can't be helped. Never mind. She will never know."

"Perhaps I ought to go back," said Cornelia.

"That would be so strange now; besides, it is almost dinner time. Let us dress, and be quick."

There was no time to think about it now, so the two girls agreed; and they soon went down to the drawing-room. Julia wore a dress of rose-coloured gauze, and in her hair some wild white roses; her brown curls fell to her neck, and her fair varying complexion looked soft and beautiful. Cornelia's dress was a plain white muslin, a few dark ivy leaves on the bosom, and in her hair; she wore not even Mrs. Stanford's crimson ribbon—nothing but the few dark ivy leaves that lay shining upon the darker and glossier braids. They were late in going down, everybody was in the room, and many eyes turned admiringly upon the pair, but dwelt longest on Cornelia. Sir Lawton received her with the greatest politeness, as "Mrs. Stanford's *friend*," laying an emphasis on the word. Mrs. Stanford always said in introducing her, "my friend Miss D'Albert,"—a peculiar delicacy worthy of her.

Mr. Darcy with a gesture of surprise and delight came forward, and they shook hands. He took her in to dinner, and Cornelia found herself once more in intimate conversation with the person she had been desired and entreated to avoid and repulse. But it was no use trying to resist the pleasure she felt in meeting him again; they were both happy; the dinner passed only too quickly, and it was not till she was just falling asleep at night that a vision of that beautiful blind face, and those earnestly raised hands, came to reproach her for the hours she had enjoyed. It had been a bright and pleasant evening, and amusing too. Mr. Darcy had sat by the piano when Julia and Cornelia played and sang. Cornelia sang with spirit, beautifully. And then after pleasing everybody, her face beaming with the excitement her music called forth within her, she sat down again by Julia, and the three amused themselves with recollections of Italy. There was something else, too, which amused them. The young lovers, next morning to be united, sat apart in a deep oriel window seat. Against the rich crimson silk draperies the light and child-like form of the young bride elect showed fairy-like and tender. She wore in her fair hair the scarlet flower of the Euphorbia, and on her bosom the sweet-scented Cape Jasmine. She had taken a spray of this, and gave it to him; and just as the others chanced to glance at them, he was bending over the flower till he touched it with his lips.

"How silly they do look!" said Cornelia, laughing.

"Why should you laugh at such happiness, Miss D'Albert?" said Mr. Darcy; but he smiled too.

"Love is such a very weak thing," she said, laughing still.

"You have never felt it then?" he replied; "nor have I. Do you think that a strange confession to make? It is true."

"I believe you," said Cornelia, heartily; "We two should agree extremely well. I don't fancy it."

Julia looked up at both, surprised; Cornelia's eyes met hers for one instant, and there was a peculiar expression in both. Julia coloured, and the corners of Cornelia's mouth spoke of a little roguery.

"What is to be the order of the day to-morrow?" asked Mr. Darcy; "if the bride looks only half as pretty as she does to-night, she may be congratulated; the bridal day is generally unbecoming."

"Oh, it will be stupid enough," said Julia, "after they are gone; two hours' bustle and excitement, and then the whole day's dullness! I shall propose an excursion."

"Where to?"

"To the sea—that is fifteen miles. Some may go on horseback, and some in the carriage. If I could see Mr. Herries I would ask him to arrange it. There he is."

She went off on her errand.

"She is a bright creature," said Cornelia, "a bright, loveable, gentle creature. Don't you admire her, Mr. Darcy?"

She had followed Julia with her eyes; and now, turning them to him, she met a gaze so earnest, so sad, so pleading, even so tearful, that involuntarily she dropped hers, and paused, suddenly surprised, and confused.

"Forgive me, Miss D'Albert," he said; "there is something in your voice and face

that reminds me so forcibly of one who was very dear to me, that it affects me inexpressibly." He got up and left her. She rose too, and joined Mr. and Mrs. Herries and Julia, who were talking over the plan for the next day. But she was very much struck by Mr. Darcy's words; she was aware that from the first he had betrayed an interest in her of no common sort; it had already touched her heart, and excited an interest there for him; a feeling vague and undefined, yet pleasureable; it was not to be likened to love, yet it might be to affection; it was a pure emotion, made up of regard, of pity, and of a strange and nameless attraction, of which she herself was hardly aware, and which she could not have described.

Mr. Herries, kind and cheerful, entered into the proposal for the amusement of the young people after the wedding was over, and Julia was delighted when she found he had settled it all with Sir Lawton.

CHAPTER XII.

"There was a mystery that defied the guess,
In so much love and so much tenderness."
New Timon.

The morning dawned grey and calm, an October morning, over the glorious woods of England. The mist lay heavy on the golden trees; but ere the young bride came forth from her chamber the sun had pierced the chilly curtain, and it rolled away, revealing the richness of the fading autumn, and leaving the air clear and mild, and the sky of that delicious tender blue we see in spring, at some passing moments, between showers. And out upon this air and scene of beauty soon came the bridal train,—the fluttering sigh of the bride, the light laugh of attendant maids, the odour of rich flowers flung before their steps. And then, as Spenser says,—

"While she before the altar stands,
Hearing the holy priest that to her speaks,
And blesses her with his two happy hands,
How the red roses flush up in her cheeks!"

—how tears and smiles are mingled,—how some, who think it treason to cry on such occasions, feel an aching in their throats, and others laugh while the very tears are on their cheeks; and all make it as joyful as they can, as the party turns homewards, following the only two who return not as they came,—the two beings before whose young lives a new future has opened, over whom a blessing has been breathed, between whom the strange and solemn words of a vow have passed,—they are not as they were,—in that brief half hour all has changed, and they have stepped across the threshold into life, where may angels wait to lead them on! And now, again, we may quote the poet of the Epithalamion,—

"Now all is done, bring home the bride again,
Bring home the triumph of our victory;
Bring home with you the glory of her gain,—
With joyance bring her, and with jollity."

Cornelia and Mr. Darcy returned together. The church was in the grounds, quite near, and the morning was so fine, that carriages were dispensed with. But the ground was rather damp, and he looked anxiously at her thin shoes. She promised to change them when she went in.

"Thank you," she said, "for taking so much care of me." She intended to smile, but, instead of that, tears sprang to her eyes.

"Dear Miss D'Albert," he said, gently, "you don't know what a happiness it is to me to be kind to you. But tell me," he added, more cheerfully, "you don't laugh at this happy couple to-day as you did last night?—you are even looking sadly upon them! What do you think of it now?"

"I think," she replied, "that they are happy who have around them those who are dear to them."

"And have not you?" he asked, as they reached the house.

Just then Julia came up, and met them; "How long you have been!" she exclaimed, with a little vexation in her tone, remarking Cornelia's tearful eye, and the tenderness of his manner as he spoke to her. "Do come in!—we are to go to breakfast directly. Come with me, Cornelia." She turned away, repeating, "Come."

"Must I part with you?" Mr. Darcy said, in a low tone.

"Au revoir!" she replied; and her kind look met his.

The morning was soon over,—the fair young bride was gone. Her uncle, Sir Lawton, had handed her, with all due state, to her carriage; her mother, a widow, had gone upstairs to weep, and her two sisters, after a long look at the carriage down the avenue, had walked slowly back into the house, and, kissing each other, had gone hand in hand into their mother's room to cheer her; when all the young folks were summoned gaily by Julia Smythe and Mr. Herries to join the excursion to the sea-side. They doffed their

bridal attire, and were soon ready, some equipped for riding, others for a drive. Julia preferred to drive to-day, to be with Cornelia. The two Miss Douglases and Miss Herries rode, with Mr. Herries and Mr. Darcy, and several other gentlemen. Sir Lawton drove the two young ladies in his phaeton, with Mr. Douglas, a brother of the bride. And it was arranged that Mr. Herries and Mr. Darcy should take their places coming home.

Julia chatted away gaily, and yet she seemed not well at ease. Cornelia, on the contrary, was less inclined to talk,—she had been thinking deeply; feeling keenly, sorely perhaps, her lonely and uncertain state. But she was calmer than usual; the extreme excitability of her nature seemed soothed, awed, as it were, into quiet, by the deeper emotions and sterner thoughts that stirred her soul. She spoke little, and Julia felt it, at last, an exertion to have all the talking on her side. Yet she had something to say which she had not said; and as the carriage neared the sandy beach, which had long been in sight, she summoned courage.

"I want to ask you something, Cornelia. You must let me come to your room to-night; may I?"

"Yes, do. I have been thinking I ought to return home to-morrow. Mrs. Stanford would wish it."

"We can talk over it to-night," said Julia; "here we get out, and they will put up the horses while we walk about for an hour on this beautiful beach. Ah! here are two of the gentlemen arrived before us!"

Mr. Darcy came up, and said that the others were following fast, and that Mr. Herries begged the carriage party would wait for them. So they strolled a little way, to some low rocks, and there they sat down, and were soon joined by the rest; when they dispersed in smaller parties, or in pairs, for a wander along the shore.

"Remember," cried Mr. Herries, to the scattering numbers, "we all meet here again in an hour. The days are not long now."

"Let us go on towards yonder promontory, that little peninsula," said Julia; "there is a high rock and pretty bay behind it, and at low tide such beautiful shells and sea weeds."

They walked on in that direction. Mr. Darcy was beside Cornelia. There were three or four besides, but by the time they reached the rock, they were alone. The others had stopped to gather shells, to play with the waves, or to look through a telescope at the distant fishing-boats. Cornelia and Mr. Darcy were talking earnestly, and had not observed them.

Cornelia did not love the sea; there had been a time when she dare not look upon its ever-changing waves; when their dancing brightness, or stormy power, seemed to mock her deep trouble. But she had conquered that feeling, though it was no pleasure and no peace to her to be beside the sea, and to hear its voice.

"You said that you were sad when you saw others among those they loved," Mr. Darcy began.

"Nay, I did not say so. You said I looked sad to-day, and laughed yesterday. I said I thought *they* were happy who were surrounded by those they loved, and who loved them. It struck me to-day, when I saw that lovely young creature so doted on and so cared for; she seemed guarded and fenced round by happiness and affection. It is a contrast to the lot of many."

"Not to yours, I hope?"

She did not reply.

"Nay," he continued, "I ought perhaps to refrain from such a question; do not answer me, if I was wrong to ask. But your own remark led to it, and it seems strange that one like you should be led to dwell on these thoughts."

"I do not wish to think about it. I am happier when I forget that I have neither parent, sister, nor brother, not one belonging to me in the world that I know of."

"But your aunt, Miss D'Albert, and all who see you and know you, love you, Cornelia—oh, let me call you Cornelia—that name, so like yourself—when I hear it, I see your form, and graceful head; and that eye, so full to me of a language my heart listened to, long and long ago—look at me, Cornelia!"—he stopped and turned to her, and overpowered by sudden emotion he went on, "I love and reverence you, but with a holy and a saddened affection—an affection that has in it more of heaven than earth, linked with the mournful past, and with the few precious hopes of the distant future. You are to me the angel of a presence past away—you are in form and face like what my mother was, in the glory of her prime; you are, perhaps, what she is now, redeemed from suffering and remorse!"

He covered his face and wept; and she stood silent before him, and down her face,

too, rolled sudden tears. With him it was but the storm of a moment; he commanded himself, and said more calmly, "I ask you only to be kind to me, and to let me be kind to you. I have been unhappy, Cornelia; there is a cloud upon my life, and into that cloud I ask none to enter; I would perhaps lead you for a passing moment under its shadow, and tell you how heavily it has lain on me; but I would not you should share my sadness, save by your sympathy; *that* you would give me."

"I would," she said earnestly, "I do."

"God bless you. I will tell you more some day, of the past, of that beloved adored mother; she who seems to draw me by some strange attraction closer to yourself. You shall hear her history, you shall judge of my grief." Cornelia's heart beat fast and loud as she listened to him, and within her breast, too, arose a strong and nameless sympathy, and spoke in her words, "you have made her dear to me already."

He pressed her hand to his lips, and it was wet with his tears.

She turned to the sea. The tide had risen, and the waves were flowing fast to their feet.

"I have had my sorrow, too," she said. "I name it seldom, save to myself—you have told me something of your life, and I will tell you so much of mine; down, down, in the depths of the unfathomed sea, lies all I loved best on earth; one who was dearer to me, lonely and friendless, wilful and unworthy as I was, than any one ever will be, ever can be, in this world again!"

Suddenly Mr. Darcy was startled by voices shouting at a distance; he turned and saw several people making signals to them, from the headland they had passed; and he saw too, at the same instant, that they had lingered in this sunny rock-bound bay, till the tide was washing to their feet, and had driven them to a narrow path-way of sandy beach, which was fast growing narrower, while above them rose a steep and almost perpendicular cliff. What was to be done?

"Cornelia! we have staid too long. Come away." But she stood gazing out upon the wide water, unconscious of danger, her hands clasped together, and the tears running down her cheeks.

He took her by the arm.

"What is the matter?" she said.

"Don't you see? don't you see that our way back is cut off by the tide?—yonder crag is our only way of escape—oh, come!"

But she seemed rooted to the spot. She turned her face to him, and a strange gleam of joy, wild and vivid, flashed across the dark lustre of her eyes. "Go," she said, "and may God preserve you, but for me the end is come. I shall die as he did—his spirit is coming on the waves to fetch me,"—she stretched her arms to the sea—"I am ready, William! I am ready—take me, take me to live with you again. Oh, come, come fast to fetch me! I am ready. I long to go!"

"Are you mad, Cornelia? we shall be lost."

"Oh, why do you stay here," she cried. "Go, go! leave me—it is my desire, it is God's will. I cannot climb yonder crag, it is hopeless. Try to save yourself. Let me be. Rest is there, sweet rest"—she pointed over the sea, and truly it shone calm and bright afar. 'Twas only around them, at their feet and against the rocks, that the great waves broke, and rolled, and roared.

"I will not stir without you. Here I stand, then, and you sacrifice us both."

She scarcely seemed to notice him; she stood as if inviting the fast-coming flood.

"William, William! I see you, I hear you, oh, joy! you come! we meet again—I am yours, your own, your true, your devoted one"—thus she murmured; and the radiance of her face grew wilder and brighter, like one inspired.

Darcy made one more effort; he grasped her arm, and shook her almost roughly, but without attempting to drag her away. She turned on him a look of reproach and surprise, and tried to shake off his grasp.

"Cornelia! I appeal to you once more—for the last time—I will never leave you; I perish with you, if you stay here. Awake from this trance—it is cruel, it is wicked; for God's sake rouse yourself, and come away." She started; gazed out upon the broad deep with an awakened look of terror and wonder; she seemed literally to awake out of a trance; and then she burst into a passion of tears, and wept as if her heart were breaking.

"Follow me," cried Mr. Darcy; "lose not one moment. Quick, quick. Oh, for the time we have lost!"

Half unconscious, half blinded by her tears, half choked by sobs, she followed; there was but room for one to fly along the narrow way still left; the spray dashing over them, and sometimes hiding them entirely from the anxious and terrified friends who were watching their perilous escape; they reached at last the crag to which Mr. Darcy had pointed.

Here he dragged her up the lower rocks, where they were safe for a few minutes; and she sank down exhausted. He looked anxiously upward. The rock was very steep and giddy, and at first it seemed that footing there was none; but there were straggling bushes, and projecting ledges, on which he thought it possible he could climb. "Wait here one moment, if you are calm and steady," he said; "promise me not to stir." She did, and he made a closer survey of the path they must attempt. It seemed barely practicable, but there was no choice. He returned to Cornelia, who had recovered her strength, and in some degree her composure, but she trembled exceedingly, and still appeared greatly agitated.

"Oh, I have been so wrong," she said. "I can never forgive myself! but only tell me now what you wish me to do, and I will try anything, everything."

"Look down, Cornelia; we have just, and only just, escaped. God has been merciful, and preserved us! and with his blessing we still are safe, if you will be calm and steady, and do as I bid you." He saw she would. She rose and gave him her hand. We will not go with them step by step up the giddy precipice, washed by the now deep foaming waters, nor pause with them, standing on the narrow ledge, and clinging to the stout stone-bound shrub—they were saved.

Their friends, in the meantime, some on the summit of the rock above the bay, some running to fetch help, and one or two attempting, themselves, to clamber down the crag, all eager to assist, had been able to do very little. It was a retired place, and it was not till they feared it was too late, that Mr. Herries procured the help of some boatmen. Two had pushed off in a boat, and two others followed him to the headland with ropes, assuring him that without such assistance it was impossible the lady could climb the face of the rock. It had, indeed, been a path of peril. When they were seen, arrived at a safe point on their way, and the joyful word was passed from one to another among the party, various were the feelings it excited. Julia Smythe, clasping her hands, swooned away; and the first sight that met Cornelia's eyes was her pretty friend lying, like death, on the green sward.

Mr. Herries and Julia, Cornelia and Mr. Darcy, returned together. When they reached home, Cornelia went to her room. She had not attempted saying anything to him; her heart was too full, too oppressed; she scarcely spoke as they drove along—but he had taken her hand as they parted, in the hall, and said—"Let us never forget this day." She did not see him again. He found, on his dressing-table, a letter, obliging his immediate return to town. The mail would pass very early the next morning, at a short distance from Dursley; he must go. The letter told him of his father's increasing weakness; he read it without pain; it brought no anxious or distressed thoughts—he laid it coldly down, but he obeyed its summons. He felt that his future meetings with Cornelia were uncertain and unlikely; and he occupied the evening in writing to her, speaking of his early life, and dwelling on the past. He did not leave his room that night.

There was an evening party in honour of the day. Cornelia begged to be allowed to stay away; but, in the course of the evening, Julia came up to her room.

"I am sorry to press it, Cornelia, but I wish you would come down. Everything is wretchedly dull and disagreeable. Indeed, how could we enjoy ourselves after such a day! And Mr. Darcy, they tell me, is sent for home, and he can't come down; and it will seem so odd if *you* stay away too, Cornelia! do come to the music-room with me. Mrs. Herries and Mrs. Douglas are there, sitting as starch and prim as two old duennas; altogether, it's tiresome to the last degree."

So Cornelia hurried on her dress, and went; and there, as she entered, were the upright and honourable ladies, conversing about her, confidentially, their chairs very close.

"In my opinion," said Mrs. Douglas, "a most extraordinary proceeding that she should leave the rest of the party, and go wandering with Mr. Darcy. Very indiscreet, to say the least of it. Indeed, I wonder they allow Julia to be so intimate with a girl in her position."

"Here they come," whispered Mrs. Herries.

"She is handsome, certainly. But there's something very odd and bold about her. *I* don't admire her."

"I wonder," said Mrs. Herries, again, "how she can come down among the people, in this way, after such a striking warning as they have had to-day! It's shocking to see how little some people are affected by these things!"—and she shook her head.

"Take no notice of her," urged the other, in a low tone, "it will flatter her too much;

she has quite enough of the heroine about her already."

But Mrs. Herries was a good-natured woman; she could not be unkind, though Mrs. Douglas was; and when Julia and Cornelia came and sat down near them, she greeted her with some cordiality, and said "she was glad to see her safe and sound."

"How vulgar Mrs. Herries is," thought Mrs. Douglas; "and how very unnecessary to say anything about it."

At the Priory, Mrs. Stanford was sitting alone, with her guitar. She missed Cornelia sadly, and felt very tired; so, when the clock chimed ten, she rang the bell for Janet.

But Janet was out of the way, and could not be found. "I know where she is," said the footman, "for I saw her going out with her sweetheart, Captain Starboard, as we call him."

True enough, Janet had walked part of the way home with him; and now he brought her all the way back again, and they were standing talking in the moonlight, not far from the house.

"And, to be sure," said the Captain, "if you had only seen the way Mr. Herries was in when he came to look for us, and begged and prayed we would come and help them. Such a sight as it was—the ladies fainting, and the gentlemen running and shouting. And them two, when they hove in sight, with their faces as white as a sea-sick landsman; I only wish you'd seen them!"

"Dear me! Well, I do think my missis would have fretted dreadful, if she'd been drowned. And who did you say the gentleman was who brought her up, and, as one may say, saved her life, and his own too—what was his name? for missis will ask all about it, when I once begin to tell her."

"Darcy, Mr. Darcy; that I'm sure of, for I heard his name very often."

"Maybe he likes our young lady?"

"He seemed put about, and anxious enough about her; but there was another went off in a dead shimmer, like a ghost, all of a sudden, the minute she saw their faces alive."

"Janet—where are you?" was called.

"Good-bye," "Good night," and a loud hearty kiss, followed this summons; and Janet, endeavouring to look unconcerned under the pressure of great news, went to put Mrs. Stanford to bed.

When Cornelia went back to her room, she felt as if in a dream. She sent away Julia's maid, and sat, lost in thought; yet it was scarcely thought—it was dreaming. The events of the day passed successively before her mind's eye, and, alternately, she rejoiced and trembled. She rejoiced in Mr. Darcy's kindness. The strange mysterious interest with which he appeared to regard her had for her a far greater charm and attraction than had he been moved by mere admiration or common love. From the moment she had heard his voice, asking at Mr. Smythe's, "Who is she?" that question became, in her mind, connected henceforth with him.

"What," she said to herself, "what, if I be something to them? What if this outward resemblance he dwells on so repeatedly be not a mere accident? Who am I—who do I belong to? Oh, vain question—vain hope—never to be answered—never to be fulfilled?"

And then came the remembrance of her escape from death, and of the sudden hope of reunion with the lost, which in those moments took possession of her soul, and raised it as on the visionary wings of grief and passion, beyond the idea of mortal danger. The prospect seemed sweet as heaven, peaceful as the far-distant expanse of moveless sky and sea; she had been overcome, spell-bound—and her return to present consciousness was accompanied by remorse that she should so have perilled the life of another.

And the unknown world at whose door they had both stood—she had thought not of it, save as William's home, and hers!—but now came solemn questionings, humbled convictions. She closed her eyes in prayerful thankfulness to the God who had spared her. She thought of Miss D'Albert, of Claud. But there came a tap at the door, and a light step entered. It was Julia; she ran up to Cornelia, put her arms round her neck, and Cornelia could feel the wet tears as she pressed her closer.

"Dear Cornelia," she murmured, "I have not half told you how thankful I am, how happy in your escape to-day; but I have been trying to keep up all day, and I felt so shaken and frightened!"

"Dear love," Cornelia replied, "I know all your kindness, and I am so sorry you have been alarmed; made ill too, I fear," she added, as Julia raised her head, and sat down next Cornelia. She looked tired and haggard; the folds of her thin white dressing-gown clung to her slender figure; she had taken the flowers out of her hair, and it hung loose about her pale cheeks. Her eyes too

were red and moist. "Oh no, not ill," she said. Cornelia drew her towards the fire. "You are cold; come here, and we will have a little talk before we go to bed. You promised to come, you know."

"I am quite warm, thank you. Do you sit down, dear, and let me undo your hair. I have sent Lucy to bed, the poor girl was half asleep. Ah! how long and thick, and heavy, are these dark braids of yours, Cornelia! If it were not so soft and silky 'twould be too thick and long. There! I have unrolled and unrolled, and now it is down it covers all the back of the chair, and touches —it even sweeps on—the ground! Only think! I wish mine were like it!"

"You will tire yourself."

"Oh no, I must do it up again now." Julia had her own reasons for choosing to stand there.

"Your hands quite shake, Julia; I am sure you are tired."

"I want to ask you something."

"Well," said Cornelia.

"May I? Perhaps—perhaps you will think me very intrusive—indeed, perhaps I ought not."

"Go on, never fear, what is it?"

"Why it is about something that was asked me."

"About me?"

"Yes, about you. I heard—that is, somebody said—and I was told, that you are engaged to—that you are going to be married to Mr. Darcy."

The heavy mass of hair dropped out of Julia's hand, and Cornelia felt her whole weight leaning over her shoulder. She smiled to herself.

"And did you believe it, Julia?"

"I did not know. I thought he admired you. I thought"—— Something caught her breath, and she stopped.

"You thought I liked him. So I do; but I am not going to marry him. Oh no! nothing could be further from my thoughts and his!" She turned quickly round, and faced Julia, who met her look with downcast eyes, and a countenance no longer pale. Tell any one who mentions such a thing, who asks you such a question, to be silent. It is a falsehood. He has been kind to me—he will be kind to me—but marry! oh, my God—no! And tell them, too, that Cornelia knows she is poor and deserted, and destitute, and has been the child of charity; that she will go on her way alone, and asks help neither from their 'evil tongues nor rash judgments.'" She rose, her tall proud figure erect, and her dark hair flowing over her shoulders; she swept it back, and, gathering it up, bound it round her head.

"Don't be angry, you quite frighten me," said Julia.

Cornelia relaxed in a moment, and smiled.

"Silly child," she said, drawing Julia affectionately to her breast,—"silly dove! here has this question been working and struggling in your little heart (*I* know—you need not say nay),—and putting you in a fever. I understand. You need not tell me any more. Only be cautious, dear Julia—sweet Julia! be happy, and do not give your heart quite away."

"Nonsense," Julia said, nestling her face against Cornelia, "don't let us talk any more about this."

"I think you had much better go to bed," replied Cornelia. "And let me go too. I am dreadfully tired, whatever you are. Tell no more pretty little stories about being quite able to stand up and comb this great hair of mine, but confess your sins, and go to bed."

Julia laughed and went. And as Cornelia kissed her, she felt the warm cheek glow, and she knew Julia was going away happier than she came.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE breakfast next day was late; one person after another kept dropping in; Cornelia was early, she had scarcely slept all night, and was glad to leave her bed; Julia, on the contrary, had slumbered soundly and sweetly, and was the last comer to the breakfast-table. As Cornelia was going up stairs to inquire after her, she saw the letters upon the hall table as she passed, and, stopping to look over them, found one addressed to herself—a full thick letter. She did not know the handwriting, nor the seal, but it struck her it might be from Claud. She was glad, very glad; she hoped it was. She opened it hastily, looked at the signature, and her surprise was great when the words, "Your sincere and affectionate friend, Lionel Darcy," met her eyes. It was a very long letter, too long to begin to read then, so she put it into her pocket, and went up to Julia's room, and stayed with her till she was ready to come down. On their way back to the breakfast-room, they heard the sound of wheels, and Julia ran to the window.

"Look here, Cornelia—a carriage. Who can it be at this time of day?"

"Mrs. Stanford's carriage!"

"Heavens!" cried Julia, "if she had but come yesterday—or if Mr. Darcy had not left!—fancy!"

"But she is not there; the carriage is empty."

They went on into the breakfast-room, wondering; and Cornelia very soon received a message, saying that "Mrs. Stanford was not well, and would be glad if she could return; and she had sent the carriage."

"How tiresome," exclaimed Julia, "that you should be obliged to go! We should have been so happy for the two days longer!"

"I hope we may be happy many days yet," said Cornelia; "but I must go this moment. I am so sorry she is ill. I ought not to have left her."

She was soon in the carriage; it was a seven miles' drive, and she took out Mr. Darcy's letter. It was as follows:—

"You have heard Mrs. Stanford's history from her own lips; and now, Cornelia, it is but doing me justice to allow me to tell you those portions of mine, so connected with hers that the two make but one story. Judge of mine, not by the fatal and distorted medium through which she regards it. I will tell you facts, and then you shall say whether or not I have deserved her contempt. I will tell you of a being, tempted, erring, sorely tried, and deeply penitent; who suffered perhaps sharper pangs that ever visited Mrs. Stanford's proud and virtuous breast. She, too, had a son—I, too, had a mother, loved with a sad and doting love, such as perhaps *her* son never felt. But I forgive her; 'the heart knoweth its own bitterness'—her trouble has been great. My father's history is known to you. I was born, I believe, during their travels abroad, and often have I wished that miserable day had set upon my grave. My mother was a most beautiful woman, the portionless daughter of an officer in Colonel Stanford's regiment. I remember little of my infancy, except my fondness for her, and hers for me; yet hers was capricious and indiscreet; sometimes she loaded me with caresses, at others she repelled and chastised me. But this caprice wore off as I grew older, and as my affection became a solace, and my society an amusement to her. I adored her. I remember yet, how delighted I was to sit upon her knee, to play with her long dark curls, and clasp and stroke her soft white neck and arms. I remember even the gowns she wore, her look, her ways, everything,—how she would kiss and press me in her arms, then put me down, and pushing me away, but not in anger, would begin to cry to herself;—and how my father, coming upon us at these moments, would rebuke her harshly, and drive me away. Then I used to hear them in loud altercation, and ran away frightened, and hid myself till he was gone out; and then I crept again to my mother's side, and forgot my fears in her indulgent love. My father wished me to be sent to school. My mother could not part with me. They quarrelled about it, and I, always very much afraid of my father, who was never kind, was so terrified, that I hid myself from them for a whole day and night. After this, she allowed me to go. We were still living abroad, but I was sent to an English school, and it was two years before I saw my mother again. I suffered very much during this separation, for my life had hitherto been such as to repel the natural instincts and spirit of boyhood, and to produce a morbid sensitiveness opposed to joyousness and bravery. My schoolfellows used to laugh at me and tease me about home till I was exasperated into passion or sullenness. I made no friends, and the only impression my school life at that time left upon me was the steady kindness of the old schoolmaster, towards whom the first feelings of real disinterested respect were excited within me. So far I was benefitted. When I returned to my mother, my father was absent in England. I could see, young as I was, a growing change on that beautiful face. The lines of care were deeper, and an expression of distress and pain was almost constant—her fine form was losing its roundness; never indeed could it be otherwise than striking, even magnificent, but it had lost its elastic movement and stately bearing. Her spirits were more unequal than ever, highly excited, or deeply depressed.

"I spent two months with them at that time, and then went back to school for two years more.

"It was a strange life that I led with her. She had received me back with tears of joy, and now I was her sole and most beloved companion. We used to wander together for half the day, through the woods and wilds about the place; at times she would give herself up to fits of melancholy the most distressing and exhausting, not a silent sadness, but wild gloom and murmurs against

herself, against my father, against me—it seemed as though some untold sorrow preyed perpetually upon her, and overshadowed for a time every source of consolation. Then she would suddenly beg me to forgive her, and weep and lament herself like a child.

"When my father returned, I went to school again for two years more, and at the end of that time, after only a week's visit to my darling mother, I was sent to England, and stayed there with my grandfather at his country house and in town for a year. I should have been very happy there, but for the continually recurring thoughts of my mother's unhappiness. My grandfather was a very old man, almost in his dotage, and allowed me to do just as I liked, and I had one or two companions who treated me with more respect than my schoolfellows had done, and my horse and my dogs, so I enjoyed myself well enough, and it was only for the pleasure of being again with her that I was glad to receive a summons to France. They had come to Paris, and there I was to join them. My dislike of my father was only altered as I grew older, in so far that fear mingled less with it. It was first roused by his early severity and unkindness to myself, then aggravated and kept alive by the frequent harshness of his conduct towards my mother, and my growing knowledge that he was the cause of that extreme pain and sorrow under which I had so often seen her suffering. At the same time I believe he was as much attached to her as he could be to any human being. She never allowed me to say a word against him, and except when carried away, as it were, by the torrent of her own feelings, I have heard her make excuses for him, and express a degree of affection for him which astonished me. But his selfishness, his coldness, his bitter acrimony, filled me with disgust, and the passionate ill temper he wreaked on her, as often as he did on me, only increased my love and pity for her. I should tell you that during my absence in England a little girl had been born, and when I returned to them I found this little creature the object of much solicitude to my mother, and I shared in it, as I always did in every care of hers. But the child died before it was two years old. Had she lived I can imagine her something like you are now, Cornelia, for she resembled my mother, and gave promise of her beauty. Her death was a grief, yet well do I remember her saying 'she is taken away from the evil to come.'

"I must pass over a few years. We had travelled about—(we all liked change and excitement)—but Paris was our head quarters. My mother's health had seemed for some time past to be failing; she often looked very ill, yet in the evening, and when she was excited, there was the richest flush of rose colour on her cheek. She had grown quieter, calmer in mind, though still frequently depressed, aud in her tenderness for me she evidently found a happiness and solace, the knowledge of which only bound me still closer to her.

"My father was always anxious for amusement, and we went out a great deal in the evening, to the theatres and operas in Paris. Often did my poor mother exert herself to go, to please him, when she would thankfully have rested. 'These things,' she would say, 'have no charms now to me. I am wearing away, and care not for them, yet I will go with him while I can.' I trembled at these words, but when she joined us dressed, and with that radiant colour, I drove my fears away.

"I did not know then, Cornelia, the history of those woful years; I did not know that real cause of sorrow and remorse which was now telling its tale of ruin on my mother's face. I had never heard of Mrs. Stanford—but from expressions which had dropped from my mother in her moments of excitement, I suspected a hidden and peculiar grief with which I was unacquainted; I had lived long enough to understand those outward and visible signs which told me that all was not right within, neither in ourselves nor in our position in society. This made me tenacious in the extreme about the conduct of others to her; I was jealous for her, and the shadow of neglect or unkindness offered to her roused me to fury in an instant. I had learned, from the habit of living with my father, to curb my feelings, and to cultivate habits of quietness and reserve, but there was one subject on which I could not be calm. I watched over my mother with a very passion of jealous care.

"It was one evening, coming out of the theatre, that the affair happened which caused so much grief and distress to all parties. My mother was coming out on my arm, my father was close behind. A young man (I did not see then that he too had a lady with him) was pushing on, it seemed to me rudely, through the crowd. He pressed against my mother. I thought he was intoxicated,

and I pushed him back, but he pressed on more and more. It was in *her* cause, Cornelia, that I raised my arm, and struck him. Then I heard the lady who was with him scream, and I caught a momentary glance of her pallid face as she fell back in the crowd. In the bustle that followed, I did not wait to know more. All I heard was my father muttering some angry words as we reached our carriage.

"Next day Mr. Herries called upon me. He behaved throughout the interview in the most gentlemanly manner, and won my respect at once. He told me that, having witnessed the scene at the theatre on the previous evening, he felt constrained on the part of his friend, then too ill to seek me himself, to demand an apology for my conduct. This I readily gave, when I heard the explanation he had to give me; and I sincerely regretted the hastiness of my conduct, though I urged, and he admitted, that I had had cause of provocation. I told him that I hoped to have an opportunity of apologising personally to Mrs. Stanford. He said he was leaving Paris that night, but that he should write to his friend, and he expressed himself perfectly satisfied with my apology. He was evidently ignorant of the peculiar circumstances afterwards revealed to me; I believe he went straight to England, for I did not see him again. Weeks passed on, and Stanford died. I felt this very much at the time, but I said nothing about it even to my mother. I had once mentioned the subject and the name, before my father, and it threw him into one of those fits of passion so dreaded by us both. He had been from home when Mr. Herries called, and knew nothing of what had passed between us.

"After some time had elapsed, and acting entirely on the impulse of my own feelings, I sought Mrs. Stanford before we left Paris, and begged to be allowed an interview with her. Recollect, I was in total ignorance of that name being my father's real one; as she was of Darcy being his assumed one. This mutual ignorance was the cause of our meeting; of that extraordinary interview of but a few moments, which revealed the story of years. I went there, not to insult, but to soothe and make peace if possible. I was repulsed almost before I had spoken, in a manner the most bitter and decided, and loaded with execrations. At first I believed she was not in her right senses, or labouring under intense bodily and mental excitement, but soon my suspicions were confirmed—I understood her;—roused and indignant, I went straight to my father. He was sitting alone when I went into the room. I forgot all my old fear of him; I shut the door with violence, and stood before him. 'Colonel Stanford, I must speak with you.' He did not turn to me, but I saw the sudden trembling of his whole frame. He asked me what I meant? I told him of my interview with Mrs. Stanford, and I gave him her own words with all their bitterness. I poured on him a torrent of reproaches, almost curses; and at this moment my mother came in. She stood aghast, listening to me as I went on. 'Don't curse your father, Lionel,' she said, 'you will be sorry for it when I am dead.' 'Oh, that you had died before you gave me life!' I cried passionately. 'I would to God I had!' she said. My father got up, and I saw the fierce anger rising in his face;—but my mother went up to him, and with an earnest gentleness of entreaty, which she had only exercised of late, she took hold of his hands, and said, 'Don't let us quarrel any more; we have had enough of this. Don't make things worse; they are bad enough—we must forgive him; it is we, we who have to regret. You had better keep peace,' she added, addressing us both, 'I am dying—I am glad of it—but let me die in what peace you can.' My father left the room without uttering a word; and I, never shall I forget the revulsion of feeling that succeeded my passion. I had spoken harshly to *her*,—and she had said she was dying!—my mother, my poor mother!—I could not speak. 'Lionel,' she said in broken accents, 'my son, forgive me.' I clasped her in my arms, weeping—yes, weeping like herself. 'Forgive, oh, forgive *me*, mother!' I kissed her again and again. I told her that she was dearer than ever, that I would shield her with my life, that I would never leave her, that her sorrows were mine, that my comforts should be hers. Surely, surely, there was something in those mingled tears and prayers that might expiate the past!

"She sunk from that day. In five weeks she was dead and buried. She was only forty-six, and she looked like seventy the last month of her illness—so withered, drawn, and faded. During these last weeks of her life she was tranquil and resigned. Her penitence, humility, and patience, only bound her the more fondly to me, yet gave me consolation for the parting. She went over with me every circumstance of her life, with the

minuteness of a tenacious memory, and with the earnest truthfulness of a spirit that had done with this world. She dwelt especially on her early estrangement from home and friends, and implored me to cultivate and keep around me if possible through life the safeguard of the pure domestic affections. She wept to speak of this, saying how small as yet had been my share of these. She told me of her first acquaintance with Colonel Stanford—how, step by step, moral rectitude neared the narrow line, and at last passed over, into the dark world of sin; how remorse and dread succeeded, and how little they were allayed by what she had looked forward to as the panacea for all she had gone through, her marriage, which took place as soon as the divorce was obtained. 'But never,' she said, 'did that terrible spirit sleep; remorse, unavailing for the past, but urging me to the humblest penitence, tracked my path night and day. Oh, my child, draw from my sad story a warning lesson—blend with the memory of me that solemn prayer—Lead us not into temptation.'

"When she first became very ill, she would see no doctor; but yielded after a while to my earnest entreaties. He came, and said there was no hope. I nursed her almost entirely myself, and with my own hands I placed her wasted body in the coffin. I cut off the cherished lock of that hair, then streaked with grey, once dark and glossy as your own. One day, a week after she was gone, I was sitting with this treasure before me, and resting my head on my hands, I did not see that my father had entered, and was observing me. I was putting it away hastily; but he came up and asked me to spare him a little of it. The tone was scarcely like his; it was humbled and grief-ful. I gave it, and that is the only time we have ever had the slightest intercourse on the subject; the only time he ever alluded to it. We were very little together afterwards. He went to live in England; my old grandfather was dead, and he occupied his house in London, where sometimes I join him. His health is failing, and it is this cause which now hurries me away.

"You may think it strange that I write all this to you. But it is an extraordinary attraction which draws me to you, which I account for by your peculiar resemblance, as I have told you before, to her, the only being who was ever dear to me. This it was which drew me that evening to Mrs. Stanford's concert; and whether we meet again or not, wherever you may be, I shall never cease to connect you with the dearest and most precious memories. So you will forgive my intrusion; you must allow me to feel that interest in you, which is only heightened by my further knowledge of you; and believe me ever your sincere and affectionate friend,

"Lionel Darcy."

As Cornelia finished reading this letter, the carriage was rolling fast up to the door of the Priory. There was a veil of mist before her eyes; but she dashed it away, and, springing lightly from the step, ran up stairs to Mrs. Stanford.

CHAPTER XIV.

"We in dark dreams are tossing to and fro,
Pine with regret, or sicken with despair."
Keble.

Yes, she ran up stairs, happy to return to her kind and venerable friend; her heart was warm, and soft, and full of emotion from what she had just read. But when she went into the library, where Mrs. Stanford was sitting, she met not the accustomed smile of welcome, the turn of the blind seeking face, and the extended arms. The old lady was leaning her head on her hand on the little table beside her; her guitar lay idly on the carpet, and her purple shawl had straggled, as it were, down about her chair and feet; she looked dejected, and neglected, too.

"Dearest lady," cried Cornelia, "you are ill; I should not have left you!" She bent down and kissed her affectionately, and wrapped the shawl about her.

But Mrs. Stanford did not return the caress; she pushed her away. "Let me be. Sit down at a little distance."

"Are you angry with me?"

"Don't ask me, don't touch me, don't say a word!" She pressed her hands to her head, and groaned.

Cornelia saw at once what it was. She dreaded the storm that was coming, not for herself, but for Mrs. Stanford. Cornelia had learned to command herself, and be patient; and now she said, gently, "I will go and take off my bonnet, and come back to you."

"No, that won't do; how do you know you may come back to me? Keep your bonnet on; you will be the more ready to go."

"Am I to go, then?"

"You are to stay only on certain conditions."

"But let us be sure," said Cornelia, "that

we quite understand each other. You are angry with me because to Sir Lawton Herries' house came a gentleman you did not wish me to meet, and——"

"Audacious!" muttered Mrs. Stanford, to herself. "We understand each other perfectly; there is no occasion to descend to any particulars, or make any excuses. Sit down; why do you stand?"

Cornelia could have borne her anger much better than this cold indifference. "I will stand here till we are on other terms, Mrs. Stanford. I wait to hear your conditions."

"Do not agitate yourself, Miss D'Albert. Do not breathe so hard and quick. I am calm."

"Tell me, then, tell me at once——"

"You are prepared, then, either to leave me, or to obey?"

"Let me hear; I am impatient——"

"Yes, you were always too impatient, Miss D'Albert."

"You wish to prove it. Don't try me too far now."

They were both silent for a minute.

"Must I leave you, then?" Cornelia said.

"You stay on this condition, that you never see or speak to that person again."

"I cannot agree to it. I have told you so before."

"Very well, then; I have nothing further to say."

"Yes you have, you have!" and Cornelia, kneeling down at her feet, took both her hands. "You have to tell me you are sorry, for I know you are, and I have to tell you so; and we will not part without—no! I will not, I cannot leave you in this way! And I will tell you more, that, whether I leave you or not, wherever I go, I shall never be happy till you forgive him! Drive me away if you will, it shall be my last word, my last prayer, forgive, forgive!"

"Leave me!" Mrs. Stanford gasped.

But Cornelia did not go; in her breast burned a holy and pure desire; she was no longer proud and angry. She held in hers those dear hands; she caressed and soothed them, as they tremblingly resisted her touch.

"Listen, oh, listen to me, unworthy as I am! Something bids me plead for him, something I dare not resist urges me to speak. 'Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven!' 'Though he trespass against thee seven times, yet shalt thou forgive'——"

"A garbled text! Recollect, *if he repent*——"

"He has repented! he did repent! You knew not the trial, the temptation. Oh, my dearest Mrs. Stanford, was it likely that, under such circumstances, under such a blight, the sorrow should fall only upon one?"

The hand of the listener lay quieter in her earnest grasp, but there was no reply, and Cornelia went on.

"The eyes of angels look down upon us from their pure heaven. There is one there, watching over you; and think you that he has not forgiven? that in his bright soul lingers one dark thought? No! let the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven; forgive, as he has already forgiven!"

"Oh, my son! my son!"

"Let his spirit console you, let it bring you peace——"

"My beloved! my only one!"

"He pleads with me——"

"It is in vain; I cannot, I cannot!" But she opened her arms to Cornelia, and pressed her to her breast. "Neither can I part with thee, wilful child as thou art. I love thee, thy voice consoles me; thou art as mine own daughter, and where I go thou shalt go. Cornelia, I forgive thee; stay with me, pray for me!"

"I will, I will! may God bless and comfort you!"

The first step was won; Cornelia was satisfied and thankful.

In a few weeks they went to London, and the current of her life was altogether changed.

Mr. Darcy stayed in London with his father. They did not see much of each other, but the old man had lately become a little less morose in temper, and kinder to his son. Kinder! if that was kindness which deigned a few words of civility through a long sullen silence, and allowed marked dislike to subside into cold indifference. No, he was not kind; and yet the dim withered eyes would follow him when he left the room, as if unwilling he should go, and, when he returned, rest upon his presence with a sort of complacency. Colonel Stanford was lonely, unloving, unloved; he stood on the verge of time, and he dared not look into eternity; the past was terrible, the present cheerless, the future—he dared not question. It lay before him like death under a sable shroud, and that shroud he dared not lift.

They had dined together; a somewhat unusual accident; when Mr. Darcy got up to leave the table, saying he was engaged that evening.

"I wish," said his father, "you would not go out every night in this way. I never go, nor see a creature, and it's horribly dull."

Mr. Darcy said he had particularly promised to join a party at Mr. Herries' that evening.

Colonel Stanford did not reply. He pushed the bottles from him, upset his wine-glass, and broke it, and, leaning back in his arm chair, began to talk to himself. "Deserted—yes! no matter. I used to think that boy would murder me—he is quieter now. I was afraid of him—hah! hah!—he is meek enough now, too quiet, no spirit. I broke that long ago—better for him, better for me too, safer—ay, safe enough; there was a devil in his eye and in his voice once—what a boy he was!"

Here he drew the decanter towards him, and poured out a full glass. "He drinks no wine—a poor creature; yet I'd rather he was sitting there than look at the empty chair—for it's very odd;" and he rubbed his eyes; "somebody else seems to come and sit down there; somebody like her—like—like——" He took up the newspaper, and it rustled loud; he drank his wine, cleared his throat—the illusion vanished, and by and by he sunk into a doze, till his servant came in and said "it was ten o'clock."

"Well, I shall go." He went upstairs, tottering and feeble. When the bed-room door was shut, "Did you find out what I wished to know, Wilson?" he said,

"Yes, sir. Mrs. Stanford is in town now. She left the house she used to have, when she went abroad; and now she is in Bruton Street, No. —, almost close to Berkeley Square. I saw the handsomest young lady I ever saw in my life coming out of the door this morning. I asked the footman, whom I know very well, who she might be, and he said they called her the young missis, for she lived there, and had a great deal of authority. But they all liked her. She was uncommonly handsome, sir."

"Well, well, the girl's nothing to me, that's certain. Nothing good of womankind ever came out of my family. But did you hear nothing else? Does she ever go out? is she well?"

"She's stone-blind, sir, they tell me."

Colonel Stanford shuddered. "Put me to bed, Wilson, do. It's horribly cold. And get me some claret mulled. I'm not half well to-night; and move that lamp to a different place—bring it nearer. There is a nasty shade in the room."

He lay down, but he could not sleep, in spite of the mulled wine. All was quiet in the house. At last, between one and two, he heard the footsteps of his son, coming up stairs. He raised himself and listened; he thought at first he would call him in, for he longed for the relief of speaking to somebody, but they were as strangers to each other, and he could not do it. The footsteps passed on, a distant door shut to, and all was silent again. And again he tried to rest, in vain; a weight sat on his heart, a cold sweat was on his brow. He rang his bell, and Wilson came. "Take a blanket, Wilson, and wrap yourself in that chair till I sleep. I don't know how it is, I cannot rest."

Wilson did not know Mrs. Stanford, but he knew Mr. Darcy's mother well. Next morning he said to the servants, "My master's not long for this world. I'm sure of it."

In London, Mrs. Stanford was again surrounded by her musical friends, a select and smaller circle, but a very delightful one, both to her and Cornelia. Mr. Herries was often there; the Smythes were not coming to England till the Spring, and Julia had returned to Florence. Madame L——, the celebrated singer, whom Cornelia had met just before leaving Italy, was charmed to see her again, praised her progress, and gave her every encouragement. And so great was now Mrs. Stanford's love for Cornelia, that she allowed her to do just as she liked. She went out to evening parties, and to the opera; was admired and liked wherever she went, and lived a new life of excitement and society. She met Mr. Darcy often; he seemed indeed to have established himself as a sort of guardian friend; for he generally knew the parties she went out with, he knew the music she sang, he knew her feelings and ways, he knew her engagements, her position, and could enter into all but one important subject connected with her—that was Mrs. Stanford's character, her goodness, her love for Cornelia. "Ah!" she used to say, "I would you knew it all!"

The Winter waned away, and the clear air and light of early Spring once more refreshed the world; the air that makes some hearts in the city pant for green fields, and sunny lanes, and hawthorn odours—that brings new hope, and new desire, and new life, upon its breezy wings. And with it grew the fresh vigour of the long-lived world of London; the warm blood bounded again through his old

veins, and the giant frame was again in full and young activity, leading on thousands to the sound of pipe and tabor, stalking merrily and proudly over the dark death-strewn earth, pausing at the pleasant places, and flying from the shade. He never

"Lifted the painted veil,
Which those who live call life."

Not he! he danced along, and led many a light young foot along the untried path; many a heart, warm, pure, and tender, to die at last upon the weary way.

Cornelia did not long for the country—for the quiet pleasures, and green woods of the Priory. She liked better the excitement of her present life—it was new and engrossing; her music was called for everywhere; she studied with greater ardour than ever, and she sang with a spirit and brilliancy seldom excelled. There was a tenderness, too, a grace, which had only of late breathed so sweetly from Cornelia's soul; whence it came, who could tell?—not even herself; she knew not, that in the luxury of that music there was the soft sigh of memory—that when she took up that farewell air, and thought of Claud, the full tears were standing in her eyes; she never remarked to herself how she sat dreaming of the past, and how often that voice and image floated before her, called up by some melodious influence connected with him, and him alone. "He never writes," she used to say, when Mrs. Stanford spoke of him; "but I dare say he is very busy."

It was a warm morning, and the windows were open, and Cornelia sat there, reading a letter.

"Cornelia, are you there?"

"Yes, sitting by the window; it is very pleasant."

"You were so quiet, I thought you were gone. Are you idle?"

"No. I have a letter from Florence, from the Smythes. I was reading—that is, I had read, and I was thinking of it."

"And what do they say? Is it a pleasant letter?"

"Indeed, I don't know. Oh, yes! I beg your pardon—very, indeed. Would you like to hear it? There is a piece of news. What do you think it is? Claud Daymer is going to be married."

"Really! let us hear all about it. Dear Mr. Claud, he deserves a good wife. You speak hoarse, Cornelia; I am afraid you are getting cold, sitting by the open window. Come away."

Cornelia came and sat down by her, with the letter.

"Now, let me hear;" and Cornelia read the following letter from Julia:—

"The days pass away so quickly, now the Spring is come, and it is so charming out of doors, that I have had very little time for writing; but you shall not wait any longer—you shall have a letter, and you shall answer it. You accuse me of being idle—perhaps I am; I would rather have a letter from you than write one myself.

"This has not been such a pleasant winter as last, when you and Mrs. Stanford were here; no charming music parties, and no sitting for Roman pictures. No, my dear! we have a new beauty to paint, and Charles has quite forgotten you and me; a new beauty, a real beauty, Cornelia, a Spanish girl—young, gentle, drooping, tender, and yet full of genius and warm affections. So they say who know her well. Her father is an officer in the army, at Madrid; she came over here with some friends, people we know, and they are so proud of her, and take her out everywhere. Charles is enchanted with her, because she is so lovely, and because she draws; I should like you to see her drawings! She designs from poems, or any description that strikes her — nothing very finished or elaborate, but a great deal of grace, and beauty, and power, too, expressed with apparent ease. She has given me one or two, which you shall see, when I come. Then, her music is charming; the same sort of thing—native, wild, original, and full of sweetness. I can tell you—don't be jealous—that Mr. Daymer admires her exceedingly. He has met her here, and at many other places, and visits often at the house where she is staying! I don't quite understand her position; I know her father has lost all his fortune, and that she is poor in this world's goods—rich in all else. A gifted creature! I wish you could see her. It is a picture, when she is drawing, as she does sometimes, in Charles's study, bending forward, showing her beautiful head, and the dark eyelashes on her pale soft cheeks. She likes Mr. Daymer very much—I heard her say so; and she sings with him a great deal. They just suit each other. People say he is getting on very well; and he is a great favourite with everybody. I told him, the other day, we were going to England, soon, and asked him if he

would not like to come too, but he seemed little inclined. He is giving Flora some lessons—by the by, the pretty child-bride is prettier than ever, and the dearest little wife that ever was. They go on just the same; and, I suppose, if you were here, you would laugh at them as you did at Dursley. But, Cornelia, it must be very pleasant to be so dear to another as Flora is to him. Theirs seems to be a love full of joy, so innocent, and bright, and youthful.

"I am going out now, and will finish this letter when I come in. Be sure and give our most affectionate regards to Mrs. Stanford, and tell her how much we miss her.

"Just come back—a piece of news! with which I shall close my letter. I told you Mr. Daymer admired this charming young donna. They are going to be married!"

"Humph!" said Mrs. Stanford, drawing her shawl about her, and looking serious; "I don't quite like it. Beautiful, and a genius, and poor!—not a very bright prospect for Mr. Claud. He wants, rather, a good, sensible, domestic, gentle, and not too clever wife."

"Oh!" Cornelia replied, "I've no doubt they will do exceedingly well! She will suit Claud better — better than a more—more common-place person would have done."

"Well, it's their own affair. He deserves to be happy, and I hope he will be. Are you going to Mrs. Herries' to-night, Cornelia?"

"I promised, if you can spare me."

"Oh, yes, go. I shall go early to bed before you leave me. I should like to hear the music you propose singing, now we are quiet, before any one comes."

Cornelia went to the piano, and the first thing she saw was Claud's last gift, lying out where she left it the day before, the copy of his Farewell. She seized it and tore it into a hundred pieces.

"What are you doing, my dear?"

"Only destroying some old papers;" and she laughed—a strange bitter laugh. Then she sat down and played—played and sang, loudly, gaily, even passionately.

"A little too much force, Cornelia; you drown the guitar."

That night there was a large party at Mr. Herries', and Cornelia went early, alone. Mr. Darcy, however, had dined with them, and he was in the drawing-room by himself, when she arrived. Mrs. and Miss Herries had not come down.

"Dear Cornelia, how well you look!" he said, taking her hand affectionately in his, "and how glad I am to see you."

She did look well, for her cheeks were burning, and her eyes shone. She returned the pressure of his hand, and said, "Dear Mr. Darcy, you are always kind; will you always be my friend, and never change?"

"Never, Cornelia, never. I will be as a brother to you. Be my sister, my beloved sister. Look at me, dear child, with those confiding beaming eyes, and tell me you believe me."

"Brother?" she murmured—"brother, father, mother, sister—have I none." She turned her full gaze, wondering, questioning, upon his. "Whence have I come?" Her hand was in his—their eyes met—the heart of each yearned to the other—a deep mysterious love, already born in Darcy's heart, seemed in those moments to awaken an answer in hers. Hand in hand they were standing—when the door opened, and Mrs. and Miss Herries came in. Mr. Darcy was agitated—but Cornelia was soothed. An indefinable consolation, a warmth as of a dear affection, seemed suddenly to spread itself over her being. And she did not awake from this trance at once, she was as in a dream; she replied vacantly, she smiled, not to an outward but to an inward and invisible influence. All the day had been a strange and unreal one; she sang, Mr. Darcy thought more beautifully than ever. It was like the voice of a spirit, now dwelling on a mournful past, now soaring to an unknown future; he half closed his eyes, and listened—drank in those sounds. It was like his own history told again—the pain, the struggles of those early years, the love and pathos, the grief that followed, till the harmonies floated on into peace, rose up to hope, and finally triumphed in joy.

CHAPTER XV.

"How is this,
That thou art here, unlook'd for at this hour?"
J. Baillie.

In Mrs. Smythe's drawing room at Florence, one bright morning, sat Claud Daymer and his pupil Isidora, the beautiful Spaniard. She was staying there. She was tracing with a pencil the outline of a head from a drawing that lay before them.

"Thank you," said Claud, "thank you very much, it is exactly what I wished, and as perfect as the original."

"As the original drawing, you mean—I should like to see the *real* original!"

She looked up at Claud with a timid inquiring look, and the dark eyelashes just quivered slightly, and the faintest rose blushed in the pale oval face. But Claud said quietly, "Perhaps you may, some day."

Here Mrs. Smythe and Mary came in.

"Did you see Julia?" Mary asked.

"No, she has not been here."

"Oh," said Mrs. Smythe, "she went off to Charles with Miss Herries' letter, in a great fuss about it, to tell the news, I suppose."

"Yes," cried Mary, "would you believe it? Cornelia is really engaged to Mr. Darcy after all!"

"I always said it would be so," said Mrs. Smythe, "but you would never believe me."

The sketch dropped from Claud's hand, and fell on the floor. He picked it up, and put it on the table.

"Would you like to have it?" said the fair young artist, in the softest voice.

He took it up again, rolled it hastily up, and thrust it into his pocket. She looked surprised, for he had crushed the drawing.

"Ar'n't you astonished, Mr. Daymer?" said Mary, "or did you know before? About Cornelia, I mean."

"It is only you who are surprised, Mary," said Mrs. Smythe; "I told you how it was, long ago."

All this time Claud had not uttered a word. Now he took up his hat and bid them good morning.

"You will see Flora to-day, Mr. Daymer; do tell her; she will he quite amused about it."

He bowed and smiled, a cold unconscious smile. He rushed home, into that little room that had witnessed the struggle of the year before, that night of pain and sorrow—dark as it was, it was not to be compared to this. Her words then were, "I feel neither for you nor for any one the affection you describe,"—and he had built, how madly and vainly he knew now, some fragile hope upon them. It was over; another had inspired that feeling which his devoted love, his tender and ardent passion, had failed to kindle. The last faint gleam of light faded from the picture of his future—dark, dark, dark, fell the night-like shadows, and the dead quiet of despair brooded over them.

For many days Claud Daymer did not leave his room; then he walked out of it on his usual business, with a face pale as death, a weak uncertain step, and a darkness round his eyes. But there was no weakness in his mental efforts, no repining, no envy or jealousy in his pure soul; who could he blame? what had he to do but to endure, and to live and act as he was bidden by the God to whose will he bowed? Yet was he sad—

> "And his heart, though stout and brave,
> Like a muffled drum was beating
> Funeral marches to the grave."

Miss D'Albert had arrived in London soon after Mrs. Stanford and Cornelia. She was with some relations, at some distance from Bruton Street, but they saw her often, for Mrs. Stanford liked her to come, and used to send her carriage to bring her for the day. She went out very little, except to Mrs. Stanford, and Mr. Herries. One night, however, Cornelia persuaded her to accompany her to a concert where she was going with Mrs. Herries, and where she had promised to sing. It was the first in which Cornelia was to take a part with professional singers, and she had declined it at first, but Mrs. Stanford wished her to go, and Madame L—— was to be there. So she agreed; but she was not in spirits about it, and Miss D'Albert thought that she was not well. When the evening came, however, she brightened up.

The party was a very large and gay one. As they went up stairs, the air was loaded with the perfume of the plants that lined the way, tuberoses, myrtles, azalias, and orange trees.

"Cornelia," said Miss D'Albert, "does not this remind you of Italy?"

Cornelia stopped, and bent down over one of the beautiful plants; Miss D'albert did not see that she kissed the shining leaves.

"Come," said Miss Herries, "don't wait now."

Cornelia seized Miss D'Albert's arm: "Aunty, the scent is quite overpowering. It makes me ill."

"Stay one minute, Miss Herries," said Miss D'Albert. "What is amiss, Cornelia?"

"Oh, nothing; 't is gone now,—only a little sickness;" but her face and lips were white.

They went on.

Miss D'Albert had never yet been with Cornelia in society. She was surprised at the effect her appearance made; the easy natural frankness of her manner, the brilliancy of her music, and the air of quiet pleasure with which she received the applause of her listeners. Mr. Darcy joined them soon after their arrival. This was another thing that surprised Miss D'Albert,—the intimacy and per-

fect understanding between him and Cornelia. She was thinking over this, and watching, in her quiet way, all that was going on, while Cornelia had joined the group round the piano, when her perplexity was increased by overhearing the conversation of two people who sat behind her. It was carried on in an under tone, but audible to her.

"I suppose they are really going to be married."

"Who?"

"Why, don't you know?—Miss D'Albert, that handsome girl who is just going to sing—there, sitting down,—(now, that 's the style of head I admire!)—and the gentleman beside her, Mr. Darcy. He is certainly a most devoted lover! How he bends over her music, and whispers something,—only do look!"

"Do you know them?"

"Only through Miss Herries. I have met her in company several times, but this is the first time I have seen her since she was engaged."

"Who told you about it?"

"Miss Herries. She said it was quite true, and that they happened to come into the room just after it was all settled. It was all at their house, one evening."

"But listen; how exquisitely she sings!—what feeling!—what expression!"

"Yes.—There is something different in her look, and in her voice, to-night. When I have seen her before, she has always been very animated and lively, with a bright colour, and playful smile; to-night she is pale, and there is something——"

"Something sad and touching in her voice, and in her whole manner," added the younger and more enthusiastic of the two ladies. "I admire her very much; I should like to know her. I hope she will be happy. I hope he is worthy of her. Who is Mr. Darcy? I shall go and ask Miss Herries all about it, as soon as I can get to her."

"Oh! Cornelia," thought Miss D'Albert, "what is all this? Can this be true, and I have so lost your confidence? I see how it is,—things are not as they were between us! And yet she would not deceive me,—my dear girl! my own girl!" And she said this proudly to herself. as the murmurs of applause ran through the room.

Her music had charmed every one. Many praised and many were silent, because they could not express their praise; and in the eyes of tender-hearted women full tears were standing.

Cornelia made her way, with Mr. Darcy, to Miss D'Albert.

"I hope you will praise her as much as she deserves," he said, warmly.

"She pleased me, indeed," replied Miss D'Albert. "That was one of the songs you used to sing with Claud; I remember it very well."

"Yes; it is a favourite of mine, aunty."

"I hear Mr. Daymer is soon to be married," Mr. Darcy said.

"Claud! indeed! is it possible?" Miss D'Albert exclaimed. "You never told me, Cornelia."

"Oh, I thought you knew. I only heard the other day. Mr. Darcy, will you just go to Mrs. Herries for me, and ask her to excuse my singing again to-night. I am so tired, I could not, indeed."

He went, and Miss D'Albert drew her into a quiet corner. "Dear child, you don't seem well to-night; you must rest. And tell me about Claud; I am so surprised!"

"I wonder he has not written to you himself. I don't think Claud has been quite kind. Do not let us talk about him;" and she turned her head away.

"Well, dear, never mind that; I don't. But just tell me, who is it to?"

"A Spanish lady; a great beauty, and a genius, but poor. The very person for Claud, I suppose. Very good, and gentle, too, they say."

Miss D'Albert watched her earnestly, as she spoke, and then there was a pause. At last she said, "Mr. Darcy seems very kind."

"Oh, very; I like him so much! We are the best friends in the world. I want you to know him better."

"People say"—began Miss D'Albert, with a smile.

"What do they say?" said Cornelia, quickly, and turning sharply round to her—a little of the petulance of her childhood in her manner.

"Oh, I dare say you know; never mind, now. You are not like yourself this evening. But we shall meet again soon, and you will let me read your true heart, as of old. Shall we not be as we always have been to each other, Cornelia? You will not let this gay world estrange you?"

"No, aunty, no!—but that which you read before is not so plainly written now. There are blots and blurs. I don't even try to make it out myself. Why should you? It is not worth while."

"They won't excuse you," said Mr. Darcy, returning. "You must submit—and only this once; and then, I think, you may get away, if you wish it." She took his arm, and went with him.

"I will ask her nothing more," thought Miss D'Albert; "and I will believe nothing till she tells me herself."

Next day, Mr. Darcy and his father breakfasted together; it was a beautiful morning, and Colonel Stanford expressed a wish to drive out. It was long since he had breathed the open air. His illness, and habits of solitude, had latterly confined him more and more to his room; but, with his increasing infirmity, the obduracy of his spirit was relaxing, gradually; he was not happier, he was not better—but he was more open to receive kindness from others, more fearful for himself, and more dependent. And his son pitied him. Filial duty, though not affection, urged him to be kind. The moment his father expressed a wish to go out, it was arranged at once, and he offered to accompany him. They did not, however, go till early in the afternoon, and Mr. Darcy took the opportunity of calling at Mr. Herries', to leave a note.

It happened that Mrs. Stanford's carriage was at the door; and just as Wilson, the Colonel's servant, was taking the note from Mr. Darcy's hand, the door opened, and Cornelia came out, with Miss Herries. Seeing her, he jumped out to speak to them, and they talked some minutes on the steps. Colonel Stanford had leaned forward, and looked on—had heard the voice, and seen the smile, which for his son possessed such irresistible attraction. Then he fell back in the carriage; and Mr. Darcy did not know, till he had handed the ladies to theirs, had again joined his father, and said "Drive on," to Wilson, little dreaming of what was to come—that a strange and sudden shock had been given to that once iron heart and frame.

Colonel Stanford lay back in the carriage; his eyes were closed, his face white, and his thin withered lips compressed. He breathed short and heavily. Mr. Darcy thought he was going to faint, and he let down the windows, and unloosed the cloak tied round his neck.

But his father pushed his hand away.

"Don't," he said, hoarsely. "Oh, my God—my God!"

"Are you ill? we had better go home." He was going to direct them to drive home, but Colonel Stanford roused himself, put his hand on his son's arm. "Let it be, let it be. Lionel, tell me,—Who was that girl?"

"Who? the lady I spoke to just now? Miss D'Albert. Why—why?" he added quickly, a sudden wonder flashing through his mind.

Colonel Stanford drew a long breath.

"Why?" repeated Darcy, "were you struck with her?"

"Struck! You must be a fool to ask me. Can't you see it yourself? Did you never see *your mother*?"

He was silent, startled with the new idea that burst upon him. And again his father leaned back, muttering to himself, and moving his wrinkled trembling hands about, in the folds of his cloak; at last Mr. Darcy said, as if thinking aloud, "It is very strange. She has neither parents nor kindred. She is lonely but she is not friendless."

"Where does she live?" said Colonel Stanford.

But Mr. Darcy knew not how to answer him.

"With a friend," he said.

"With whom? Who does she live with? don't you hear? What is it to you? why do you look so, Lionel? Lord in heaven! what are you dreaming of? You frighten me. Everything frightens me. Why don't you answer? I say, where is she, and who does she live with?"

"She lives with Mrs. Stanford."

Not another word was said. The nervous trembling of the old man's frame told the work of exhaustion all this had done. When they reached home he tottered with difficulty into the house. He was very ill. Mr. Darcy and Wilson assisted him to his room, and, after seeing him made as comfortable as outward things could make him, Mr. Darcy went straight to Miss D'Albert.

She was sitting quietly at her work that bright afternoon, while the gay world was whirling past, and she was thinking over the evening before, and of Mr. Darcy himself, at the moment he entered.

"Now it is all quite true," she said to herself, and Cornelia has sent him to tell me!" She received him very kindly, though with some constraint.

When he had sat down, "I am sure," he said, "you will forgive this intrusion for the sake of a mutual friend and favourite."

"For Cornelia's sake—yes, indeed. But it is very kind of you to come and see an old woman living so quietly as I do."

"Miss D'Albert," he said with great ear-

nestness, "I have a particular object in coming—you can doubtless assist me."

"Cornelia has told me," she interrupted—

"What?" he again interrupted her, "she could not, I think, have given you any idea of what I am going to say."

Dear child, thought Miss D'Albert; then there was a reason for her silence, for all that seemed strange.

He went on. "I want you to tell me the particulars of Cornelia's childhood. Are you really a relation or not? Who were her parents?"

"I am not aware she has a relation in the world. None were ever known to me. She came into my care when an infant of two years old, through my brother, who was Curé at Pau——"

"At Pau! well?"

"It was at the time of the cholera."

"Go on—pray—can it be? is it possible?"

"The child came from the house of people whom we believed to be her parents. Mr. Darcy, if there was a child there in whom you were interested, tell me the name of the people it was with?"

"My mother left her beautiful little child at Pau, under the care of Cecile Moranne."

"That is the name." Miss D'Albert tried to speak calmly. "But now your story further."

"We heard, some time after we left her, that she had perished with her nurse, and her nurse's husband, in the cholera. We never heard anything further. And it was long before we discovered what had become of those poor people."

"But strange—strange indeed," cried Miss D'Albert, "that you should have rested on report or supposition only!"

"I was absent from my poor mother at the time of her distress about this. She was very unhappy. She made every inquiry she could, but in vain. I may tell you, Miss D'Albert, for I know I may confide in you, that she was not aided by my father. He never loved this poor child. We were miserably and unfortunately situated then. I have myself rejoiced in spirit, and thanked God that the child so early found its everlasting and happy home—there was not such for it on earth! but to proceed; we must pursue this. Have you nothing by which to identify, nothing further to convince me really, of what seems now a strange mysterious dream, that this beautiful Cornelia is *my sister?*"

"Your sister!" echoed Miss D'Albert, the confusion of her ideas threatening to overpower her—"this all seems very strange and sudden."

"So it is—it is—I tell you it is all a dream to me yet." He rose and walked about the room, agitated and uncertain. "But tell me—answer my question, do not leave me in suspense, have we any further means of verifying our supposition?"

"That may, or may not be. You shall see." Miss D'Albert went to her own room, and unlocking a certain case she always carried about with her, she took out the packet containing the playthings which Cornelia had brought with her—the old doll with the rosary, and the old seal and cornelian heart.

"May God's good providence guide us here!" was her sincere and fervent prayer.

She unfolded these precious relics before Mr. Darcy's eyes; instantly he recognised the seal. "It was my own," he said; "look at the initials, L. D., Lionel Darcy; and now I remember buying this string of beads, and bringing it to my mother. It is enough, enough! it is true, how true! and again I recollect (how memories glide in, and forgotten things reappear!) this little cornelian heart; it ought to open by a snap at the back—yes—so—and there are the letters of her name—her dear name."

He stopped, choked with emotion.

"Thank God!" said Miss D'Albert.

"Alas!" he replied, "I cannot rejoice for her, that she is proved to belong to those who are unworthy of her! to the sinful and the sorrowing—to a home without a hearth, a home on which no blessing has ever lighted, around which no happy and confiding love has ever clung! Cornelia, dear Cornelia how shall I welcome thee?"

"She will bring a blessing there. Only love her—cherish her as she has been loved and cherished!" and the good Miss D'Albert turned away, and, hiding her face from him, wept mingled tears.

"Love her!" murmured Darcy; "love and cherish her! ah, only too dearly! Has not my heart yearned to her, longed for her, doted on her already? And God be thanked! yes, His great name be blessed for ever, who hath kept this love pure and undefiled!"

He clasped his hands—he could have knelt in earnest and prayerful gratitude. Miss D'Albert, occupied with her own feelings, took no note of his—they were each, as it were, alone.

"Spirit of my mother," still Darcy's heart

spoke on, "now redeemed and blessed, praise Him for his great mercy! Look down upon me, upon thy children, once more to be re-united on earth; be with us ever, and witness now my true and loving acceptance of this sacred charge!"

He was raised beyond himself, into the pure air of a holy and religious devotion; and it seemed to him that the peace of heaven met him there.

Next morning Cornelia received a little note from Miss D'Albert. It said, "Will Mrs. Stanford spare you to me this exening, and let you stay all night? I want you very much, dear child. I am sure you will come. I wish it so much."

"Go, my dear," said Mrs. Stanford. "I can spare you; but don't stay longer. Kiss me, dear Cornelia; how I do love thee, child! Thou art as mine own."

It is needless to recount all that passed that evening with Miss D'Albert and Cornelia. After they had talked long and earnestly, Cornelia, exhausted with the excitement of blended emotions, sat silent by the window. She leaned her arms on a little table, and gazed up into the evening sky, as we have described her mother ere their parting. "Large tears, that left the lashes bright" were standing on her cheeks; her heart throbbed, the pulses of her head were swollen too, and beat heavily, "My mother! my brother!" she said; "and is there one I may call father? will he own me? And oh, aunty, she who has been so good to me; she, so afflicted, so suffering, so injured, she will never love me more! To her I stand in the dark shadow of the dreadful past, one of its terrible things—never shall I see her again, never! I know it. We must bear our lot; I can bear anything with him, with my brother. Where is he? Will he not own me? Oh yes, he will, he will love me—he does. God has inspired our hearts already with that precious love. Let me go to him—can I? No, he should come to me!"

"He will come. He said he would come this evening, if he might be allowed to see you, my love. Fear nothing, dear child."

"I do not fear; but all seems so strange, so new?"

Mr. Darcy came. As his footstep was heard on the stairs, Miss D'Albert glided from the room. And the brother and sister, clasped in each other's arms, tasted the sweetness of a love for which they long had yearned in vain.

"My sister, my beloved, my lovely sister!" he whispered, seating her beside him, fondly, while she held his hand in both hers, and again and again pressed it to her lips, murmuring the dear word, "Brother!"

"Bless her!" he said, "bless her, Heaven, bless her, mother! Cornelia, my darling, new-found treasure, look at me with those dear eyes, tell me you are glad; let me see the face of my sister!"

She raised her head and looked upon him; and a smile, beautiful as an angel's joy, irradiated that face; and in his, too, glowed the happiness of new hope and new affection. Again he clasped her to his breast; and then came mutual glances over the past and into the future; and he spoke of his father. Of Mrs. Stanford it was long ere either of them dared to speak.

Miss D'Albert joined them, and it was late before Mr. Darcy left.

CHAPTER XVI.

* * "Think not
I have enjoy'd what guilt so deep had earn'd.
Oh, no! I've borne about, where'er I went,
A secret wretchedness within my breast,
Turning delight to torment."

J. Baillie.

The morning after, Mr. Herries was surprised by an early visit from Miss D'Albert. They had not been long acquainted, but had been mutually pleased with each other when they met. To him Cornelia turned in this hour of pain and perplexity with regard to Mrs. Stanford, and she begged Miss D'Albert to go with him. She had received a line from Mr. Darcy, early, saying, that his father was so very unwell as to prevent his leaving, and begging that she and Miss D'Albert would avail themselves of Mr. Herries' advice and assistance. Cornelia's first impulse was to go to her herself, to tell her all, to receive at once her sentence of banishment, or forgiveness for her brother; but she knew Mrs. Stanford too well not to dread the shock for her; and she took the wiser course of gradual and calmer explanation.

It was soon all told to Mr. Herries; and it was agreed that he should go at once to Mrs. Stanford, and return to Cornelia at Miss D'Albert's.

The old lady, seated in her accustomed chair, was tuning her guitar. She had been expecting Cornelia for the last half hour, and was a little out of spirits. But when the door opened she expected it was Cornelia, and brightened.

"Ah, Mr. Herries! I did not expect you

this morning. But you are very welcome. I am rather dull without Cornelia. And this thing," pushing the guitar away, "is out of tune. I can do no good with it. In fact, I believe nothing is right when she is away."

"It is a charming morning; you must go out to-day."

"Perhaps so. When she comes, we shall see. She went to Miss D'Albert's last evening. I wonder she has not come in. Pray tell me the time."

"I have seen her this morning. She won't be here just yet. She sent you her dear love, and she hoped to be here again soon."

"I wonder at this. She never stays away without asking me."

"She is a very interesting creature. I have been hearing her early history."

"Indeed! from herself?"

"No; from Miss D'Albert, who called upon me this morning, to consult me on some particulars respecting Cornelia's affairs which have just come to light."

"You surprise me, Mr. Herries. Is anything amiss?"

She was roused, and bent forward earnestly, turning her head attentively towards him. He glanced at those dark sightless orbs, and deep pity for her softened his voice to tenderness, as he said, "Nothing is amiss; but there are circumstances connected with her of which it is necessary that I should inform you."

"Go on at once," she replied.

And gradually, as he went on with clearness and caution, Mrs. Stanford became aware of what these circumstances were; she bent down her head, shading her face with one hand, and with the other she grasped tightly the arm of her chair. She uttered no exclamation, gave no expression to the agony of her heart, as Mr. Herries spoke of the father and mother of Mr. Darcy, of Cornelia's peculiar and unmistakeable resemblance to their unfortunate mother; but when he had concluded, she rose up and said, "I will thank you to assist me to my room."

Her hands shook, and her limbs were so feeble, that it was with difficulty Mr. Herries supported her. She sank upon the couch by her bedside, and he gently folded her shawl about her, and placed a cushion for the aged drooping head. "Shall I ring for your maid to make you more comfortable?"

"I cannot be more so than I am," she answered, with all her own dignity. "Will you do me the favour to call again this afternoon?"

But when she was left alone the torrent of her passionate tears burst forth—emotions unchecked by age, unsoftened by time, rushed along the hurrying stream. The past was all before her; she lived again, in that hour, its bitter trials; she saw again the once idolised being, her husband, in his youth and beauty; she saw again the dreadful words dance before her eyes, that parted them for ever—she clasped again to her bosom her cherished child, and watched again beside his bed of death. And with all this was now blending a voice she had learnt to love so dearly, the echo of a footstep whose lightest tread had of late to her been cheerfulness and joy—the voice, the footstep of Cornelia, whose form, never beheld, she had yet imaged to herself as one of beauty, one she loved.

"Oh, child! child! thou who wert the daughter of my heart; was it that I heard in thine *his* voice?—art thou his indeed? Ay! his!—and hers!—yet I do not hate thee, though never, never can we meet again!"

After some time had passed, and her shaken frame had re-assumed its power, she went up to the bust of her son, and laid her hand upon its marble shoulder. "Everything," she murmured, "everything I love is taken from me. But soon must I follow; soon to thee, oh, beloved one, my spirit shall take its flight." A sudden thought seemed at this moment to pass through her mind—a sudden pain. "Forgive *him*?" she went on; "take into mine the hand that was raised against thee?—oh, never!—forgive me that I cannot forgive!"

While all this passed, the father of that dear son lay dying. The strength of a constitution that kept its hold on life with giant grasp prolonged the days and hours of torture; and to these bodily struggles were added those of the startled, questioning, remorseful soul, superior in agony and power. No deadened sense aided to quiet, no dozing insensibility lulled, the consciousness of life. Sharpened to intense vision, back upon the past, onward to the future, it quivered fearfully on the verge of the two worlds. In the fast-fading light of the one stood the weeping shadows of the once fair and fond; those dim, reproachful, haunting forms! From the thick darkness of the other no light gleamed forth, no hand was stretched to aid. He lay in a large room, with the curtains of

his bed drawn back and the windows wide open. The bed-clothes pushed down, and his breast bared for freedom and air, showed the attenuation of his frame.

Darcy was by him—Darcy, smitten to the heart to see his torture, and to remember their long and bitter estrangement.

He had revealed to him that morning that his daughter still tived—lived to love him if she might. He had refused to see her; and had only sunk the deeper into despair and pain.

"Father," said Mr. Darcy, (seldom had that word passed his lips,) "what can I do for you?"

"Don't look at me so. Don't fix your eyes in that way upon me—you are like her. Oh, go away!"

He obeyed, and sat down at a little distance, inexpressibly pained. At last, his father called him.

"Lionel, you asked me what you could do for me. Fetch my wife; if confession aids the dying, I will confess. Fetch her. If she comes only to curse us, let her come."

Mr. Darcy hesitated not a moment; he left the faithful Wilson by his father's bed, and hurried first to Mr. Herries. Mr. Herries was not in; he was at Bruton Street, and thither Mr. Darcy followed.

Mr. Herries had called again on Mrs. Stanford, as she had appointed. He found her calm, but determined never to see Cornelia more. Mr. Herries, with great delicacy and gentleness, spoke of Cornelia's warm and deep attachment, of the grief this would be to her; and touched upon the happiness and beauty of that spirit which "believeth all things," and "never fails."

"It is enough, Mr. Herries, enough. I pray you to be silent on this point. She has found another home, other friends; *he* will protect her, who is her brother; but it is impossible that any one connected with him can ever be otherwise than a stranger to me. I could wish indeed that she had fallen into better hands."

"Madam, allow me to say, pardon my perseverance, you do not know Mr. Darcy."

"No, sir, nor shall I ever."

"Poor Cornelia!"

"She shall be no loser by this separation. I shall double, treble her allowance."

"This, I am sure, she could not accept. She can accept nothing, madam, at your hands, under present circumstances."

They were interrupted by a servant entering to say that Mr. Herries was particularly wanted.

"I will return to you, my dear madam," he said, leaving the room.

It was Mr. Darcy. He told his errand.

"Then let us go to her at once," Mr. Herries replied; "this is perhaps the crisis which shall decide all the rest. It will be a shock—but it must be borne. She has wonderful, even too great strength."

He returned to her, and hastily announced Mr. Darcy; and, before she could move or speak, Mr. Darcy went up to her, and, taking both her hands, held her forcibly in her chair. A convulsive quiver passed over her face and her whole frame.

"Mrs. Stanford," he said, "the time is passed for any questions or any apologies between us. I come to you from my dying father."

"Mr. Herries, here!" she exclaimed, shaking off Darcy's touch—"here!" He hastened to her, and took her hand.

"He is dying," added Darcy; "dying, and he wishes to see you."

"I ever obeyed his wishes, sir," she answered, "and I will not refuse him now. I shall be ready immediately." She rose, intending to go to her dressing-room, but she could not. She sat down again, and Mr. Herries rang the bell. His carriage was at the door, and into it in a few minutes he handed Mrs. Stanford, and accompanied her himself. He was satisfied that he had done right; she had borne it, and borne it well. The greater and more exciting interest had overwhelmed all other distress; it was lost in this absorbing and sudden effort. She did not speak all the way, nor did he attempt to interrupt her. When the carriage stopped at the door, she was seized with a shivering which threatened to deprive her of all power. It was the shock, telling upon her physical frame. But she conquered it by a stern summoning of her dauntless will, and stepped with a firmness which conscious dignity and devoted energy alone could give, into the home of her husband. Mr. Darcy had arrived a few minutes before, and went to prepare his father for the interview. She was still silent, but her lips moved as if in prayer, and the blind eyes were upraised—the draperies that hung about her aged and still graceful form trembled about her, and her hands were clasped tightly together. Mr. Darcy had sedulously refrained from approaching her, or offering her any attention, but now, return-

ing, he said, "You will not refuse my assistance?" and she took his arm.

They entered the bed-room, and the wild wandering eyes of the sufferer turned to the door. With a cry in which anguish, remorse, and entreaty mingled, the word "Wife!" burst from his lips. She was gliding on in silence; but when this voice, once so beloved, struck upon her ear,—the voice of her husband—the voice of her son, she shook, tottered, and fell forward senseless. "What! is she dead? has it killed her already?—has the sight of me—nay! nay! she is blind! she cannot see—that was my work too!"—he groaned. "Here! here! carry her here."

"Hush! wait," said Darcy, "she will recover; have patience. Wilson, lay her down." She revived in a very short time, and, putting out her hands as if to seek for some one, she cried, "Where?" and endeavoured to rise. With Darcy's help she was placed by the bedside. "Where is my dying husband?"

"Here," answered his hollow anguished voice.

"Give me your hand," she said. She took his shaking hand in hers, and, for the first time in his long hard life, tears gushed from his eyes. But she was calm. "A reverent resignation, in which impatience and passion had been quelled," gave her a spiritual power. She had not suffered in vain, and though Patience had yet to do her perfect work, and win for her the crowning attribute of heavenly Charity, she was nearing the goal, and already the airs of that celestial dawn fanned her soul.

"I can never behold you again. Sorrow has long since deprived me of sight; but I am come here in answer to your call. At this solemn moment it becomes us to think of the past only in reference to the future,—to forget everything personal — anger—blame—even grief itself;—and I come to forgive you."

The dying man held her hand with a tight grasp, and with straining eyes gazed into her face.

"Tell me," he gasped, "tell me, will it save me?"

"I pray for you," she replied, "that God in his mercy may succour you. Alas! no feeble power of mine may aid you now."

He cast her hands away. "Then, go, go. My soul thirsts, and none can give me to drink. Even your forgiveness—it is cold and comfortless. Take her away. Lionel! do you hear me, take her away!"

Darcy meanwhile had stood apart, with folded arms and closed eyes; the image of his own lovely and suffering mother lived in his heart; it was full of her, and he seemed not to hear what his father said. Then Mrs. Stanford spoke again.

"My forgiveness is not cold; and I would to God it were not comfortless. Listen to me, Stanford. I have passed through no trifling ordeal; and the fire had so seared my heart that forgiveness once seemed to me a thing impossible—so far away, so utterly beyond thought or sight, that had you knelt to me then, I would have spurned you from my feet; but it is different now. We stand each of us with this terrible life behind, and the awful future visibly opening before us. On this side the grave I never thought we should have met again; and, since we have, let us thank God and part in peace."

"Peace! peace! there is none for me! Don't mock me!"

"Lord have mercy upon him!" she fervently sighed.

"Oh, yes! pray, pray for mercy. Perhaps from your lips I could believe the promises I have heard of."

She spoke to him of penitence and prayer, of faith and hope, and, inspired with holy firmness, she succeeded at last in administering the needed consolation; and as her repeated forgiveness, her solemn assurance, her earnest entreaties, calmed his agitation, his expression changed to one not less mournful, but less wild and tortured. Again he took her hand, and now addressed her by her name.

"Emily, I bless you for this. You have heard my fierce impatient agony, and you have soothed it. Now, hear my further confession;—all I have longed to tell you, and never thought I could."

"Whatever you are able to tell me; but do not exert yourself too much. I will wait——"

"There is no time to lose; and I am calmer now. There was a time; yes, I remember it vividly, old as I am, and on this death-bed where a lie dare not come—there was a time when I loved you."

The hand he held in his trembled, as he spoke.

"I did not insult you by the offer of my hand without affection. I loved and admired you then; and perhaps I admired you still more afterwards, when your kindness and patience were sorely tried."

He stopped to breathe, and she listened with head bowed down, and tears falling over their joined hands.

"But—but—there was one I had seen before, and it was only for a brief time she was forgotten, and forgotten only because I had feared that I should not find in her the answering affection I sought;—for I heard she was engaged to another;—and then, when I saw you struggling to hide what I had vainly hoped to awaken in another; when I was urged by my father, and pressed on by circumstances, I hastily decided. You were happy; but beautiful, loving, devoted as you were, my happiness was incomplete. I returned without you to the regiment"—— again he stopped.

"Go on—tell me all—you are forgiven already."

"There we met again—there I tasted eagerly of the delirious enchantment of her presence—and I found then, and I cursed my destiny, that she too loved as I did, that she was wretched as myself. But we were never happy—never—never. I was cruel, she was miserable, and she broke her heart—no—it was I who did it—I broke her heart—and I have lived myself to be the prey of remorse, to be hunted to death by these spectres of the past—my sin unexpiated—till now unrepented—and it is here yet—here, here, lying on my breast night and day, and your image, and hers, and *his*, the image of our son—have stood staring at me, embodied curses, for years and years!"

"His blessed spirit can know no anger, no revenge. May he look down upon us now! Oh, be comforted!"

"Nothing holy and undefiled may look upon me," he muttered gloomily. "Even your eyes that once beamed upon me have been darkened through my sin. Oh, this pain! this pain! I smother—raise me!"

He was raised up, but still he writhed and gasped. "It won't be long—it won't be long! Pray for me. Wife, farewell! Oh! something of my long-lost love returns at the soft touch of your hand; here, place it on my head—do you feel the burning? The hell-fire of years has been smouldering there!"

She placed her hand upon his brow. "Hush, Stanford! hush—the penitent shall be forgiven. Now, to me, too, our early years return—in my heart again, all sin and grief forgotten, revives the sweetness of the distant past. God be praised that I have been permitted to speak my forgiveness. Oh, may He accept your penitence, and pardon you, and pardon me—through Jesus Christ!"

"Bless—bless you, my wife!" he faltered—"but where is *she?* Lionel! Lionel! your mother—oh where?—could she forgive me too, the bitterness might pass away! Yonder I see her stand—but she comes not—in her name, oh, in her name, speak to me, my son!"

Darcy, hearing himself called, hurried to the bed, startled from his mournful reverie; for, standing apart from them, the low half-choked voices had not reached his ear distinctly. "What is it?" he said.

"Tell me, in her name, in your mother's name, that you forgive me—tell me she forgives me, and I die in peace."

But Darcy answered not—it was too much—his lips were sealed.

Mrs. Stanford guessed the struggle within him. From that moment a strong pity for him was awakened in her breast. She stooped down, and kissed her husband's brow, saying, "Ask no more from earth. Look only to God through Christ. In that great promise all others are, we trust, included." Her voice sank to a whisper, as she uttered the word "Farewell!" and, seeing him sink back exhausted, Mr. Darcy led her away, and they rejoined Mr. Herries.

"You will let me know how," she began in feeble and humbled tones——

"Yes, how he goes on. You shall hear from me;" and Mr. Darcy left them. Mr. Herries took Mrs. Stanford home; she would have no one with her, and he left her there all alone, and quite exhausted.

In the meantime, Cornelia had awaited, with anxious impatience, the result of Mr. Herries' interview with Mrs. Stanford. She knew nothing further of what had passed; nor had she heard again from her brother. Both she and Miss D'Albert, therefore, longed for his promised coming, and welcomed him that evening with no ordinary anxiety. He told them what had occurred. Cornelia listened with straining eyes, and beating heart; "then she has forgiven him, forgiven my father, forgiven us all, has she? oh, has she, Mr. Herries? and may I go to her to bless her, and thank her, and try to console her? Oh, thank God, thank God! let us go!" And she started up. But Mr. Herries said, "Not yet. She is not prepared to see you. Wait until I see you again. Consider what she has gone through, and don't expect too much."

"Not too much—no. But I may expect to see her again, may I not?"

"Not at present, dear Cornelia."

She looked deeply grieved, and said, "No. I ought not to expect it, how could I? But, Mr. Herries, can you answer this question—a question I fear, yet long, to ask? Has my—my father, asked for me? Will he see me before he dies?"

She looked earnestly and tearfully in his face, and her lips trembled. "I am sorry," he replied, "that I cannot answer this. I heard nothing of it, nor did Mr. Darcy mention it."

She was silent, and the large tears fell and rolled slowly down her cheeks. She went and sat down at some distance, and Miss D'Albert arranged with Mr. Herries that they should meet next day, after he had visited Mrs. Stanford.

That night, after passing hours in solitary thought, in prayer, in strivings with herself, a great peace spread its brooding wings over the aged lady's spirit. Exhausted, she had closed her poor eyes, and a beautiful vision appeared to descend before her. Restored to sight, she gazed with awe-struck joy, and drank in its beauty and its meaning. She saw an angel, bright with the hues of heaven, stand as in the halo of a gold and purple sunset; before him knelt supplicating forms, with faces hidden in upraised hands; and over them the angel seemed to shed a pearly dew, to baptise them with the waters of a holy love; and then upon that celestial face beamed a well-remembered beloved smile, and it was the voice of her son she heard in these words; "Be at peace. Love ye one another. And lo! I bring ye a great pardon." She stretched out her arms towards that heavenly vision, but it faded, and she awoke to her dark world of reality.

After this, she rested calmly. Refreshing sleep visited her wearied frame; and, when Mr. Herries came in the morning, she had taken new resolutions, and fortified herself for new exertions.

"I have just seen Mr. Darcy," he said, as he took a seat beside her. "His father has passed a restless night, but had some sleep towards morning, and the physicians, though they consider him in imminent danger, say it is not impossible he may linger some days."

She bowed her head in acknowledgment of what was said.

"Mr. Darcy also bid me say that he has asked for you again; in fact, during his wanderings in the night, he called upon you continually."

"Has he asked for his daughter?"

"He has spoken of her, and is not unwilling to see her. Mr. Darcy appeared to wish it very much, and it is arranged that he should fetch her this morning at twelve—an hour hence," he added, taking out his watch.

"Mr. Herries, I shall meet Cornelia there. You will be good enough to accompany me?"

"My dearest madam," he replied, and he laid his hand tenderly and approvingly on hers, "I shall be only too happy."

"Things are changed here," said Mrs. Stanford, in a low tone, pressing her hand upon her heart; "it has not been without a struggle, and great throbbing pain, but, with God's help, I have overcome it. There was one who said, 'I have lived and loved.'—I say, with humble gratitude, I have lived and forgiven!"

"May God bless, sustain, and reward you!" After a pause Mr. Herries resumed, "I will go back and bring my carriage, and call for you in about half an hour."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Stanford; "but if you will afford us the time, I should be glad if you would first take my carriage, which is waiting, to Miss D'Albert's, and tell Cornelia, with my love, that I have sent it for her. Bring her here. I think this will be best."

"Anything you wish is best." And he went directly.

Cornelia was exceedingly depressed that morning. She had been longing to hear something from Mrs. Stanford, and longing to see her brother again. She felt more forsaken than before—more anxious, and more sad. But a note from Mr. Darcy had cheered her a little, for it told her that he would call about noon. She sat expecting him, restlessly, and wondering why he did not come. She got up, and went to the window continually, and then sinking back on the sofa, in a corner, wearied herself with vain impatience. At last, she heard a carriage stop—he was come! She looked out—nay, not her brother, but Mr. Herries, and Mrs. Stanford's carriage! He ran up to her, and it was soon explained. They were joined by Mr. Darcy; and, with her hand clasped in his, she sat content, listening to Mr. Herries as he told of Mrs. Stanford, and to Darcy as he spoke of his father; but how different seemed each account! the calm holy patience of the one, sustained by a sublime virtue, and heavenly hope; and the rest-

lessness, remorse, and terror of the other, which every attempt at comfort, every remedy they could apply, failed, but for a moment, to soothe or allay.

"He will see you, for a few minutes, dearest Cornelia. Will you put on your bonnet, and come now? that is, after you have been to Bruton Street? I will go home and meet you. Yes, home—it is to be home, when you come, darling. Our home must be the same."

He kissed her fondly, and followed her with eyes of the deepest affection, as she left the room. In his love for her, pure and happy though it was, the tenderest admiration mingled with affection; he doted on her, now that he could love her with all his heart. He had so long admired, so long regarded her with peculiar interest, that now it was something more than a brother's feeling. He rested on her with that perfect affection—

"Just less than a lover's, and more than a friend's."

They went to Bruton Street—Cornelia and Mr. Herries. It was not the light-footed gay Cornelia, whose step Mrs. Stanford heard approaching. It was the grave, trembling, anxious daughter of a guilty and miserable father—of that husband who had so deeply injured her. Mr. Herries merely took her to the door of the room where Mrs. Stanford sat; and when Cornelia entered he closed it gently. There were solemn thoughts in the hearts of all.

Mrs. Stanford heard her come in, and signed to her to approach. Both were silent; and Cornelia, kneeling before her, felt again the pressure of her loving arms. No tear was shed, no word spoken; feelings too deep for utterance, too solemn to admit of words, marked this reconciling hour. The strange relationship in which they stood was felt by both, yet never should its painful knowledge touch the love of either.

At last Mrs. Stanford spoke.

"Time is passing, and we have none to lose. I will go with you to your father. Fetch my cloak, child."

The last few words, in her accustomed tone, opened the pent-up flood-gates of Cornelia's heart, and she burst into tears.

"But happy tears they are! Oh, yes! don't mind me! It is your goodness, your kindness, that makes me cry," she murmured, as she bent over Mrs. Stanford, and kissed her hands and brow, and caressed her with a child's love.

"Don't, child, don't. Cornelia, we must keep up. I expect you to be a support to me. Let me have no weeping, no giving way. Look at *me*. Yet you will not say I do not feel."

Again, that holy aged foot entered the chamber of agony and death. This time Mrs. Stanford leaned on Cornelia, who, less composed, less firm, scarce dared lift her eyes. The door of the room was nearly opposite the bed; and, as the sufferer lay there, he saw them enter. He lifted up his feeble arms, and turned away his eyes. His son stood by him.

"It is she! it is she! Has she come to forgive!"

They knelt down beside the bed.

"I have forgiven," said Mrs. Stanford—"I, your wife, and these, your children—they, in their mother's name, will do so."

She beckoned to Darcy; could he refuse that summons, that Christian's sacred purpose? No; he came to them, and Mrs. Stanford took his hand, as he knelt beside her.

"Children!" said the old man's husky voice; he tried to put his hand upon their heads, but he could not. A great change was passing upon him; the hues of death gathered on his face.

"Father!" they said.

He rolled his dying eyes upon them; he gasped for breath.

"Wife!"

She took his hand in hers—another gasping sigh—another attempt to speak, in vain—a deep breathless silence, and then another long, fluttering, feeble sigh. He was gone.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Is not the pilgrim's toil o'erpaid
By the clear rill and palmy shade?
And see we not, up earth's dark glade,
The gate of heaven unclose?"

The Smythes were about leaving Florence for the baths of Lucca. They wrote to ask Claud to spend an evening with them before they left. When the note was brought in, he was reading a letter from Miss D'Albert. She had written to him on hearing of his proposed marriage, and rallied him on his forgetfulness of old friends. "Don't you think we should sympathise with you, Claud? I assure you, we often talk and think of you, too; and Cornelia speaks of the happy days in Florence. You must bring your bride to England, and let us know her. They tell us she is beautiful——"

Here Claud pushed back his hair off his forehead, and laid down the letter. "What

folly is this? *My bride?* He laughed bitterly. "What do they mean?" He took up the letter again, glanced it over to the end, and tore it up. "So she concludes I have forgotten her. Well, it is best so, perhaps. Let it be."

He sent word that he would go to Mrs. Smythe's the evening they mentioned, in the following week. He did not answer Miss D'Albert's letter at once. There was a pride in the heart of Claud, with all its goodness. He was hurt that they should believe this. "Well, then, let them believe it. Let her believe my heart as easily won as her own."

Claud's spirits grew better. Everybody said he was more lively and animated than usual. His pupils seemed to give him pleasure, especially the gentle Spaniard. He saw her everywhere,—always at the Smythes, where they frequently met for music. And she was there the evening he went to pay them a farewell visit.

"Oh, I am so glad you are come early, Mr. Daymer," cried Julia, entering the room with gaiety; "I have something to tell you. Wonders never cease. I told you Cornelia was going to be married to Mr. Darcy;—well, what *do* you think?—instead of her husband *to be*, he *is*,—guess!" She put her hands, with the letter, behind her, and stood looking at Claud.

A sudden colour rushed over his pale face, but he made no reply. He thought Julia was joking.

"Her brother!"

"It's true," said Mr. Smythe.

"Positively true," said Julia, reproducing her letter.

Claud turned quietly away, but a great sigh swelled his heart almost to bursting; then a thrill of dreadful fear and wonder rushed through him; soul and body felt it. "Have I heard aright?" he thought. He sat down, and tried to say calmly, "Who has told you this?"

"Hah! Mr. Daymer, you would like to know, wouldn't you? Shall I show you the letter? Shall I tease you a little longer?"

There was no one in the room but themselves and Isidora. She raised her head, and looked first at Julia, and then at Claud. She saw his colour change, and his eye shrink from the gaze of Julia's. A very slight quiver on her lip, a very slight tremulous motion of the little hand that she raised at the moment and passed across her eyes, told that her questioning gaze had been answered,—that she had been told *that* which set the question at rest for ever.

The letter was from Mr. Herries, written by Cornelia's own request, to Julia. It was a genuine document—Claud must believe it! But it was only a few lines. It mentioned the fact, and expressed nothing more.

Again Claud sought his silent lonely chamber, and new hope stirred within him; yet mingled with fear, with terror even, for the happiness of her, to whom his own was as nothing. He had never heard the report of her engagement contradicted; but of this he dared not think; the idea of Cornelia's being exposed to grief or danger was enough. He sat buried in thought; for a whole hour he never stirred; his very breathing, his very life, seemed oppressed with the weight of reflection; but gradually it rolled away; the deep anxiety, like a dark cloud, passed, and left the inward world clearer and lighter. His resolution was taken.

He wrote that night, before he slept, to his pupils, and to his various friends; gave up his engagements for two months, and prepared to set out for England. See Miss D'Albert he must. And perhaps Cornelia—perhaps—but Claud gave no further rein to the flights of imagination.

Mrs. Stanford could not pass unscathed through the fiery ordeal which closed the trials of her long enduring life. While the excitement lasted, the bodily powers bore up, and answered the severe demand. Now they sank. She sat for whole days as if in a dream, speaking only when she was spoken to, and taking no note of what passed around her. With difficulty Cornelia persuaded her to take the necessary nourishment. She would shake her head, and lay it down. But by and by this numbness of mind and body seemed to give way, and she became again acutely sensible to all around her,—rose from her bed and sat up as usual.

After the death of Colonel Stanford, she went into the country, to the quiet seclusion of the Priory. She had begged Mr. Darcy to spare Cornelia to her a little longer. "It will not be for long," she said; "the silver cord is loosed, and the wheel is broken at the cistern. Soon I shall lay down this shroud of earthliness; it is ready to fall to its kindred dust, and my soul looks and longs for rest."

The day before they were to leave London, Cornelia was placing the guitar in its case; and lightly, thoughtlessly perhaps, passed

her fingers over the strings ere she closed it up.

"Hush, Cornelia—leave that. I want it no more. I shall hear no more music in this world. All that is over. Since I heard his voice again, no music can ever touch me. I had drowned the remembrances of old in the enchantment of sound—it beguiled my darkness—it has been to me a dreamy delight; but it is over now—past and gone, the tale is told."

She was taken seriously ill soon after their arrival at the Priory. The pain in her head and eyes, which had been gradually coming on, became more intense than ever; and left her, after the most severe suffering, greatly enfeebled. And day by day she grew weaker, and with this weakness the heavenly serenity of her soul increased. She was able to leave her bed for a part of every day, and sat up, supported by cushions and tenderly watched by Cornelia, with closed eyes, and hands folded meekly on her knees. Sometimes she would speak a little; but was generally silent and perfectly placid. It was beautiful to behold her. One day she said, "You don't go out enough, dear child. I can feel the fine warm air. I know there is sunshine and bloom now. Go and enjoy it."

"I only wish to be with you," replied Cornelia.

"Write to your brother; ask him to come down on Saturday, and spend Sunday with you here. Do. It will please me, Cornelia. I cannot receive him, for I am not able. He shall be your guest. Come, write at once."

It was decided, and Mr. Darcy promised to come. But had she been better, had she been able, Mrs. Stanford could not have met him. She felt that the serenity of her spirit was now not to be disturbed; and though she had entirely forgiven, though every root of bitterness was expelled from her heart, she could not meet him without emotion, painful emotion. They were best apart.

But he and Cornelia were happy, oh, how happy! wandering together amid the bursting summer of nature, in the woods about the Priory, that Saturday evening. He drew from her, with all a brother's tender interest, the little history of her childhood, and the few years of youth she had yet lived. He drew her on to speak of Claud Daymer, for Mr. Darcy had not been blind—but here, Cornelia paused, and a shade of reserve was thrown over their conversation.

"I heard that Claud was to be married soon. Is it true?"

"I did not doubt it," she answered; "why, do you?"

"No, I have no particular reason to doubt it," he answered.

"Look!" Cornelia said, "look, Lionel, how exquisite is this archway of overhanging trees, this young tender green clothing the grey branches. And in the distance, the town, and the towers of the Cathedral. Did you ever see a lovelier English picture?"

"Let us go to the Cathedral, to-morrow," he said.

"Yes, if Mrs. Stanford is no worse, we will go, it is a long delightful walk. Perhaps too long to walk both ways. She will let us have the pony carriage there, and we can walk home."

It was a beaming Sabbath day. They went to the cathedral, and Cornelia worshipped for the first time by the side of one whose heart responded to her own. It seemed to her as though a blessing were breathed upon them, on the calm holy air within those venerable and majestic walls; as though they shut in and secured with a grave firm hand this new affection.

She looked into her brother's face, she met his eyes turned for a moment fondly and gratefully on her. He too rejoiced in spirit; in his heart, as in hers, was swelling the pure gratitude which expressed itself in praise,—

> . . . . . "As soft and deep
> Around the awful arches sweep
> Such airs as soothe a hermit's sleep;"
>
> "From each carved nook and fretted bend
> Tones that with seraph hymns might blend."

There was but one sad thought deep in the recesses of Cornelia's soul. She repelled it as it rose. And yet there was a voice in that thrilling and glorious organ, which awoke it continually, which drew it forth in spite of her efforts, and expanded it to pain. She breathed a long deep sigh, but she could not throw it off; she raised her eyes wanderingly to the lofty roof, along which rolled the full tide of sacred sound; and her thoughts were of the past, and a name unuttered was in her heart and on her lips, blending with the holy voice of praise and prayer. The music ceased, —slowly, softly, it sank into silence, and her eyes fell. Is she in a dream? Has it conjured up a form before them, to mock reality? —a delusion?—or is it indeed Claud Daymer who is standing there? She grasped her brother's hand tightly—his gaze followed hers. It was no dream; and one glance, one

real living look, told her that it was Claud, unchanged, and not despairing.

"She could not trust her melting soul
But in her Maker's sight—
Then why should gentle hearts and true
Bare to the rude world's withering view
Their treasure of delight?

"No—let the dainty rose awhile
Her bashful fragrance hide—
Rend not the silken veil too soon,
But leave her, in her own soft noon,
To flourish and abide." (1)

Claud and Cornelia stood by the death-bed of their beloved old friend. Placidly, without pain or struggle, she faded away. Composed, but not quite collected, at the last, she murmured happy words, and seemed to behold visions of light by the never-darkened eye of the soul. Expressions of endearment, as if addressed to one near her, fell at times from her lips, "lead me on—I come—blessed—beloved—are you here?—my son—my dearest"—and a flitting tender smile would play over the beautiful, serene, aged face. She had already entered into rest, ere the mortal had put on immortality.

(1) Keble.

At her death Cornelia was placed in possession of all her fortune, except the landed property, which was left to a nephew of Colonel Stanford's, the son of that sister who had been kind to her in her grief.

Many years after, a party, just arrived in Florence, walked out upon the Ponte Santa Trinita. It was a fine clear evening, such as has been described before; and they sauntered on, talking low.

"On such a night"—whispered Claud, half smiling.

"Hush!" said his companion.

"Own, then, that this night is fairer, Nelly!"

She smiled, and turned to look for her brother; he was not alone—there was a lovely little girl beside him whom he called "Anna;" she was his own; and on his arm leaned a lady, no longer Julia Smythe, but Mrs. Darcy.

And who comes last, with two other little children, gay creatures full of life and joy, drawing her on merrily, hanging to her kind hands, and calling her "Aunty?"

She is perhaps the happiest of them all.

THE NEW CURATE.

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE introducing you, reader, to the remarkable personage who gave occasion to the present story, I must try to make you familiar with the scene of his labours and exploits. This is Noseleigh, in Devonshire, a "wealthy and increasing manufacturing town, the centre of a rich and populous agricultural district," as the promoters of the Great North Devonshire Railway described it in their prospectus, but in the view of its inhabitants, or such of them as have ever been ten miles out of its neighbourhood, a singularly dull, common-place, second-rate country town, manufacturing nothing but straw-plait and scandal. It is, however, a place with some pretensions to prettiness; there are few pleasanter views in the county than that on emerging from the deep old coach-road which cuts through the hill-top, and enables the traveller to take in at a glance the valley, the town, the stream, and the dense beech-woods of Lord Noseleigh's park in the distance. Many and various as have been the states of mind in which I have returned home—from school or from college—in disgrace, in love, or in debt—that view has never varied in its soothing effect.

The ivy-covered cottage belongs to Mrs. Welter, the widow of our last rector; she knows everybody, and is disposed to be censorious. The other cottage rather behind it, with trees and a lawn sloping down to the water, is occupied by Mrs. Howard, a rather pretty lady with two children. Unlike her neighbour, she knows nobody and is known by everybody, for her husband only comes to visit her once every two months, the *charitable* view of the case being that he is a fellow of Magdalen, Oxford, who has married, but does not wish to forfeit his fellowship. Now let us cross the bridge. The large red house at the corner is our great inn, the Noseleigh Arms, kept by Mr. Tom Saunter, a sporting character, and one of the Devonshire eleven. A little further you have the rectory, a nice old rambling house; and opposite to it the church, much desecrated by modern lath, plaster, and whitewash. Immediately abutting on the churchyard, with one window commanding the church and vestry-doors, is the tall upright abode of Mr. Benjamin Collins. Mr. C. is a Radical, and the plague of the rector, the churchwardens, and all their subs. He opposes every rate, and periodically libels the curates in the *Western*

Herald. Why he is not a Dissenter everybody wonders. He has, this his worst enemies cannot deny, one very pretty daughter. There she is, Julia Collins, with the green parasol, coming out of the draper's shop! Her cantankerous old father dotes on her, and she, as will presently be shown, is romantic in her ideas and aristocratic in her tastes. You see she shakes hands with a weather-beaten gentleman in blue; that is Admiral Fyler, her father's great opponent, and the High-Church High-Tory leader of Noseleigh. They walk past, and we bow to them from the coach, which stops shortly afterwards at the Red Lion to change horses. The passengers, bound like myself for Noseleigh, dismount.

The dreaded interview with "the governor" is now over, and we are quiet again. I must, therefore, try to make you better acquainted with the rest of our neighbours and their concerns, at least so far as we have to do with them at present. We will begin with the Church, of course. The Rev. John Smith is very well off, the living being worth considerably more than a thousand a-year. In the second place, he has absolutely no character at all, nothing salient about him; all of him is as round, smooth, and pluffy as a bladder. In early life he worked hard at Cambridge, and is said to have made himself a very decently-educated mathematician. He was immediately elected fellow of his college, and there he waited doggedly on, eating and drinking his fill at the hall table, until a good college living should fall to his share.—which event happened after he had vegetated twenty years in the celibatarian dignities of his fellowship. Meanwhile he had fairly run to seed—the slang expression being literally true in his case—and was not greatly reinvigorated by grafting on himself a waning maiden, whom he picked up at a watering-place,—the first lady, it is said, whom he met after obtaining his benefice,—a woman with even fewer peculiarities than himself,—too solemn to be quite silly, too trifling to be quite a Gorgon. I remember the protracted torture of listening to his sermons in the holidays. I remember them all, in their periodical recurrence every two years; the one against the Roman Catholics, the one about our "Dissenting brethren," the Sacrament Sermon, the series on the Commandments,—their very phrases are stereotyped on my memory. At the morning service, as little attention was paid to the sermon as the stoutest Anglican could desire. But the state of things in the afternoon was very different. Then the curate preached. The young ladies looked out the text carefully in their Bibles; the old ones wrinkled their foreheads, and prepared to listen and criticise; Mr. Collins took out his pencil and paper; and the admiral, to vex him, looked as laboriously edified as possible.

I remember the reigns of two curates at Noseleigh preceding that of my hero. The first I recollect was Mr. Sloman, the meekest, mildest, most cadaverous, and most unearthly of men. He was Evangelical, and said to be a choice *protégé* of Mr. Wilberforce.

He was a bold fellow, though, on occasion, and nearly got knocked down by the choleric old admiral, in spite of that gentleman's respect for his cloth, for protesting against the introduction of cards and punch after a private meeting of some charitable society at the Fylers'. But with certain middle-aged gentlewomen he was an idol. For be it known, that from the visit of a Miss Elizabeth Travers to her aunt's at Clapham, where she was introduced to Mr. Wilberforce, there sprang ten thousand woes to Noseleigh. This lady, on her return, was found to have given up all thought of matrimony, and to have taken to herself instead a desire for proselytism which seemed perfectly maniacal. In her parlour there immediately formed itself the nucleus of what is called the "serious" party at Noseleigh. In less than six months after this original sitting, the "serious" and "worldly" sections of the town and district stood apart, "like rocks that have been rent asunder." Strifes and divisions were as rife as scandal had been before. Miss Travers and the set who held the Wednesday prayer-meetings at her house publicly declared that, in their view, the whist-club, which had Thursday *séances* at Mrs. Welter's, was composed of little better than castaways. Poor Mrs. Welter and her friends, chiefly married ladies, who liked to talk of their miseries over their cards, retorted with sneers, sarcasms, and inuendoes respecting Miss Travers' former tastes and pursuits. But they were being fairly and rapidly beaten. The young ladies turned against their mothers in a body, and when Miss Travers persuaded old Smith to engage Mr. Sloman on a direct recommendation from Clapham, there seemed no limits to the success which was to attend her proselytising. Mrs. Welter was in a fair way to retire to Bath, leaving the field shut against all dissipation, but that of a yearly trip to attend the May meetings at Exeter Hall.

The tide ebbed, however, when Mr. Sloman rather unexpectedly married the heiress of the rich retired glover, and went off to lead a fashionable congregation at Brighton. Smith was beating about for a curate, and with not much prospect of success, when there came to him a letter from Lord Noseleigh, then resident in Paris, begging him to excuse his (Lord N.'s) suggesting a person to supply the vacant post, but that he had been persuaded by his son, a young man at Oxford, to use his influence in favour of a Mr. Dashwood.

The gentleman in question, Lord Noseleigh added, was a great friend of his son's, and was said by him to have a decided ecclesiastical vocation. The rector accepted Mr. Dashwood at once, who arrived in less than a fortnight. On the very first Sunday he struck his flock dumb with amazement. Having only heard the word "Tractarianism" in dim and distant murmurs, the effect, when it burst on them in the concrete with bowings, Gregorian tone, and surplice, was electrical. He was highly popular however among the young ladies, and things went so swimmingly with Mr. Dashwood, that altar-cloths were fast supplanting Berlin-wool-work throughout Noseleigh, and the country round about. Indeed, but for an unlucky accident, we might in time have come to nunneries and sisterhoods of charity, but the vulgar part of the community declared against him, and Mr. Dashwood, after being four times pelted down the High Street, and once ducked in the Nose, was obliged to quit Noseleigh for ever, in the very moment of victory.

The variations of opinion respecting the curate's proceedings failed to make the smallest impression on the sleepy nature of our rector, till his *morale* was touched through his *physique*. In other words, he got pelted himself one evening, and thereupon grew very anxious for Mr. Dashwood's departure. This exceedingly awkward state of things brought on a terrible fit of the gout, and the reverend gentleman, never having suffered five minutes' pain in his life, was almost out of his wits. Without losing a day, he posted to London, and saw Chambers and Brodie. One or other of them hinted that Wiesbaden might suit him; and accordingly Smith settled to start for Wiesbaden in a fortnight, the only obstacle in the way of his going at once being the want of a curate. As the readiest method of supplying himself, he advertised in a Church newspaper for a clergyman of moderate views, to take charge of a large country parish for three months, terms fifty pounds, and the use of a comfortable parsonage-house. The next day but one came the following answer :

"The Honourable and Reverend Frederick Cavendish has perceived the Rev. M. A.'s advertisement in the —— *Gazette*. Though Mr. Cavendish has never been in the active exercise of his profession, on which he is not dependent, he would not object to take the charge of the cure in question for a limited period. Terms are not material in Mr. Cavendish's case.

"*Grafton Hotel, London.*"

Though the rector, mindful of former curates' *escapades*, had determined to make careful inquiry, this note looked so well, and he himself was so anxious to be off, that he closed with Mr. Cavendish at once.

On the morning of the third day after the acceptance had been sent, Mr. Smith and lady departed for Wiesbaden ; and in the evening of the same day Mr. Cavendish reached the Noseleigh Arms in a post-chaise and pair.

CHAPTER II.

Our new curate arrived on a Monday—nearly a whole week before his powers and peculiarities could be tested in the pulpit. This was vexatious; but he would, of course, call on his principal parishioners, and great was the speculation as to the household which would be first honoured with a visit. The "Honourable" prefixed to his name had done its work, and more than one family bore deadly malice to its neighbours, because their position in society entitled them potentially to an earlier call. Luckily, very luckily, as the event proved, for Mr. Cavendish, he selected the Collinses as the first recipients of his attentions. It is, we must confess, not improbable that the form of Julia Collins may have caught his eye, as she stood in the huge bay-window of her father's house overlooking the churchyard. However, it was certainly fortunate he paid his first visit there. That old Radical, Collins *père*, already exasperated by the departure of his periodical victim in the *Western Herald*, Mr. Dashwood, had been growling maledictions ever since he heard that his successor was an Honourable, and of "moderate views." But this preference in visiting conciliated him altogether, he being no less sensitive to Mr. Cavendish's rank than is usual with gentlemen of his politics. He received Mr. Cavendish even civilly, did *not* sneer at the Church, and took great pains to enlighten his visitor as to the state of the battle then being fought between the North Devonshire Company and the London and Ilfracombe Direct Atmospheric. Since this great contest just then agitated deeply the public mind of Noseleigh, I may as well take the opportunity of mentioning, that the partialities of our town were altogether enlisted on the side of the Direct Atmospheric, which had promised us a station in the middle of the market-place, and carriage of our produce to London at next to nothing. Mr. Collins, partly because he was a man of business, and partly because he liked to fly in the face of his neighbours, warmly supported the pretensions of the North Devonshire, not countenancing it the less because it promised to spoil by its station that view of Noseleigh of which we Noseleighans were so proud. It was something to have the ear of a person likely to be as influential as the Hon. Mr. Cavendish; and accordingly old Collins discoursed away on traffic, carriage, and so forth, for the best part of half-an-hour, to the considerable discontent of his daughter, who wished to draw out the handsome gen-

tleman beside her on more familiar topics. Mr. Cavendish listened attentively, occasionally making remarks on the rival railways which old C. thought surprisingly pertinent for a clergyman, and then, turning to Julia, made some observation on the scenery of Noseleigh. This was the commencement of a conversation respecting scenery in general, and Devonshire scenery in particular.

"You know," said Mr. Cavendish, "we Cavendishes are naturally biassed in favour of everything connected with *Devonshire*."

This masterly allusion to the aristocratic head of his house fairly overcame both father and daughter, and Mr. Cavendish rose to depart with the very visible tokens of an unconditional surrender before him.

I need not detail the particulars of the round of visits which the new curate paid in the course of the week. Suffice it to say, that in every house he displayed the greatest strategetical skill, adapting himself to the partialities and slipping past the prejudices of the inmates in a way that was quite wonderful. In case of difficulty, the association of Devonshire with its duke became the ready subject of an allusion, and proved uniformly irresistible with his hearers. But it was manifest that he was disinclined to commit himself to any opinion on the religious controversies which distracted the place. This was unsatisfactory to us in the warmth of our partizanship, but, of course, Sunday must decide the points in doubt. Well, Sunday came, and Mr. Cavendish—a tall good-looking gentleman, with black whiskers, almost unclerically bushy, and a keen expression of face—mounted the reading-desk, and read the prayers uncommonly well on the whole, though a little natural nervousness caused him to make a few mistakes. Then came the sermon. The young ladies looked out the text with most unsparing vigour; and the controversialists set themselves to decide whether they were to have a friend or an enemy. But the sermon at once disappointed, pleased, and edified us all. It contained no word on Tractarianism, Protestantism, or any other "word of fear." It was a learned, elaborate, and most vituperative attack on the *Unitarians*. And as there was not a Unitarian in the place, so we were for once unanimous; and Mr. Collins, whose friend the stout Baptist minister had been aggravated by the Unitarians in some matter connected with Lady Hewley's Charity, was disposed to be gratified.

I left Noseleigh, the day after Mr. Cavendish's first exhibition, for three weeks.

I found on my return that there had occurred in Noseleigh events which baffled all comprehension; the whole face of society was changed. Paris before and after the great 24th of February was a joke to it. And our new curate was the magician who had effected it all. The first thing I heard was, that all our religious dissensions had disappeared, all parties were united—amalgamated; their junction was to be formally announced and ratified at a meeting in the rectory drawing-room that very evening. By what miracles of persuasion Mr. Cavendish had brought about this astonishing result I cannot say. I only heard the fact nakedly announced. We were henceforth, we of Noseleigh, to be the parents of the "Church of England Philanthropic Association," a society which in its ultimate developement might be expected to embrace the world. Universal philanthropy, conducted on the principles of the Church of England, was to be its characteristic object—this had for a week past been matter of general agreement, the details being reserved for future settlement.

I went to the meeting at the rectory, and heard Mr. Cavendish deliver an eloquent and touching address. In his peroration he was magnificent. "To adopt," said he, "the language usually employed in the description of highly useful but more secular undertakings, our society will have its terminus in Noseleigh, its trunk line will pass at once through Africa and Australia, its branch lines will permeate the world. It will throw open to the philanthropic public the dense vegetation of Australian error, the yet unworked mines of immorality in Timbuctoo. Civilization will be conveyed from Noseleigh to regions which have only to know it to appreciate it, and the return carriages will bring back to us the gratitude of converted millions."

The rapture of his auditors was unbounded—nay, was hardly checked when the collection of subscriptions began. Mr. Collins actually headed the list with a donation of 20*l*., which he ostentatiously threw down on the table; the admiral followed with the same sum; others with proportionate amounts,—even Mrs. Welter, with what she called her mite. The subscriptions amounted to 60 or 70*l*.

"Who shall be treasurer?" said Mr. Cavendish.

"Better pay it into Glyn and Co.," answered the cautious Mr. Collins.

"Ah!" said Mr. Cavendish, with a smile, "my bankers! Suppose I draw a cheque on them, and they will credit us to the amount."

And the curate took from a desk one of Glyn's cheque-books, and drew the cheque accordingly. But hardly one of us, as we stood over him, could help seeing that it was for 200*l*. Had Mr. Cavendish wanted anything to add to his popularity, the combined delicacy and generosity of this proceeding would have completely done his work.

There was, however, yet another way for Mr. Cavendish's reputation to extend itself. I

found that he had not been long in Noseleigh before he proved himself as consummate and far-seeing a man of business as he was an accomplished and liberal gentleman. A very few days after his arrival he announced himself a thorough-going supporter of Mr. Collins's views on railway matters; he repudiated the Direct Atmospheric altogether. Such a course was directly at variance with the strongest prepossessions of the Noseleighan public, and the curate's fame was apparently in the greatest danger. But see the result. In less than a week there arrived intelligence that the Direct London and Ilfracombe had proved a bubble. The chairman had fled to Boulogne, the secretary and deposits were not forthcoming, and the provisional committeemen were shown to have been men of straw. Noseleigh was mad with rage at the way in which it had been treated. However, abuse of the Direct Atmospheric soon lost itself in admiration of the curate's prescience. People seemed not to know how to ascribe too many faculties and powers to this Admirable Crichton—this compound of wisdom and goodness. As to the gentleman himself, he disclaimed all merit in the matter. "It was Mr. Collins's good sense, Mr. Collins's clear explanations of the state of the case, which had led him to express so publicly and positively his distrust of the London and Ilfracombe." Slowly, but surely, Mr. Collins began to share the curate's popularity. The Noseleigh vestry had already found that this plague of their meetings and scrutinizer of their misdeeds had been completely disarmed. Mr. C. was now as gentle with them as a lamb, and the relief was inexpressible. The speakers were not now called to order every five minutes, the annual rate was passed without opposition, and the churchwardens escaped being libelled in the *Western Herald*. I think I may say that so altered was the general opinion of Mr. Collins, that people were even becoming reconciled to a fact which was daily getting more evident—the increasing admiration for Julia Collins on the part of the aristocratic curate. People *did* whisper, "What *will* his family say?" but they did not write anonymous information to the Duke of Devonshire, as would without doubt have been the case under like circumstances a month before. And in a few days more a piece of news almost raised Mr. Collins to the level of Mr. Cavendish. The North Devonshire, to whom the field was now quite open, announced that they would grant some concessions as to the course of their line which had been demanded by the inhabitants of Noseleigh, but which the Company had refused to make, irritated, without doubt, by the support accorded to their rivals of the London and Ilfracombe. The Noseleighans, who had no right or reason to expect anything of the kind, were overjoyed; and it was simultaneously reported that the Company had yielded exclusively at the instance of Mr. Collins. The curate took advantage of the excitement to propose that a subscription should be opened for the purchase of a piece of plate to be presented to the old gentleman, and so opportunely was the proposal made, that it was received with acclamation. Fifty pounds were subscribed at once, although not a soul could have supposed that the purses of Noseleigh could or would have disgorged such a sum, after seventy pounds had been collected only a week before. But so it was, and the plate was ordered by Mr. Cavendish of a London silversmith whom he patronised. I saw it when it arrived—a broad salver, ornamented with elaborately worked arabesques. A few only of the privileged were permitted to inspect it while it lay at the rectory awaiting the inscription. But these few told all their friends in confidence that the salver, to judge from its size and splendour, must have cost nearer a *hundred and fifty* than fifty pounds.

Thus did our new curate heal the bitterest of the distractions which had rent society in Noseleigh—that caused by the universal antagonism of Mr. Collins. I should exhaust the patience of my readers if I detailed to them all the various other strifes, heats, and divisions, to which his soothing influence was applied. Mingled dexterity, good temper, and liberality, performed the feat. As an instance of the delicate manner in which he employed this last agency: there were, and all in the town, two rival drapers' shops, almost the only case with us of opposition trading. The rarity of such rivalry made us all partisans of one or the other interest—customers, and staunch ones, of either Codfish or Macsilkie. Before Mr. Cavendish had been long in Noseleigh, he was inveigled on frivolous pretences into the two establishments successively. He bought gloves in one and a pocket-handkerchief in the other, and examined a number of other articles in both. It so happened that he expressed great admiration of some handsome damasks which each shop was making its show article. He really could not decide between them; both were perfect of their kind; Macsilkie's were extremely chaste, Codfish's the richest he had seen. He really wished his mother could see them; perhaps one might do for the curtains of the library, and the other for those of the third drawing-room at Masborough Castle. It was curious that his mother was furnishing those rooms, and had been particularly disappointed in the damask submitted to her. These remarks were devoured by the shopmen and the ladies who had persuaded him to enter the shops. For they at once and surely settled the question, which had

been earnestly agitated in Noseleigh, respecting the individual family of Cavendishes to which Mr. Cavendish belonged. It was now beyond doubt that he was the son of Lord Kingsland, of *Masborough Castle*, in Yorkshire. The Town Library had a Burke's *Peerage*, which showed at once that Frederick D'Arcy Cavendish was the second son of that nobleman, in holy orders; and that the eldest son, by a former marriage, was forty-three years old, married, and childless. This exciting news spread in all directions, nor did it fail to reach Messrs. Macsilkie and Codfish, since that very evening two large parcels arrived almost simultaneously at the rectory, each directed to the Right Hon. Lord Viscount Kingsland, Masborough Castle, York, "care of the Hon. and Rev. Frederick Cavendish. On approval."

Meanwhile, it was perfectly manifest to all who concerned themselves in the matter—which category included pretty nearly everybody in the place—that things were coming to a crisis between the curate and Julia Collins.

As you lingered under the window, you could hear Julia's voice raised in singing her favourite songs, and then the curate's deep bass modulated to soft accord, as he expressed his enthusiastic approval. To say the truth, I have since learned, and may with confidence inform the reader, that the curate's homage had completely turned the poor girl's head. What with his appearance, his sermons, his popularity, and his prospective coronet, he seemed to her more worthy of heaven than earth. Still openly as his admiration was expressed, it was long before he made anything like a positive declaration. Over and over again she recalled to mind his language—his passionate language. Could there be any doubt of his attachment? No, it was impossible. Why then delay the full expression of his feelings? She had it. It must be so. His family were doubtless opposing the match. A thousand visions of haughty aristocratic fathers, meekly angelic persecuted young ladies, spirited, devoted, disinherited sons, ideas which two years of strenuous novel-reading had engendered and nourished, crowded into her mind at once. She felt herself a heroine, she felt equal to any amount of persecution—she would bear anything for his sake; and, just as she had thus concluded, he stood before her. He had stepped through the window from the churchyard, and was looking at her with an expression of face compounded to her eye of mingled tenderness and sorrow. He threw himself into a chair, and remained for a few moments gazing at the delicate hand which was carelessly placed on an arm of the sofa. Then, raising his eyes to her face, he said, with some agitation,—

"Julia—may I—if I dared——," and then he stopped. It was too much for her. She burst into tears. Mr. Cavendish's agitation increased, and he attempted—rather clumsily, it must be confessed—to console her. But Julia's resolution was taken, and, after a few deep-drawn sobs, she commenced with tolerable firmness:

"Mr. Cavendish—Frederick—I know all. Your father, your noble father, has forbidden your presence here. Go, leave me for ever. I am not worthy of the sacrifice you would make for me."

"Julia," said he, "adorable Julia, hear me. All is not yet lost, I may yet persuade——"

But Mr. Collins's step was heard outside the door. Mr. Cavendish drew a ring from her finger, replaced it by the glittering diamond he himself wore, imprinted a kiss on her unresisting lips, and vanished through the window by which he had entered.

It did not at all surprise Julia Collins when she heard next day that he had announced his intention of leaving Noseleigh for London, and remaining there till Saturday. The pretext for his departure was as follows. Some most daring robberies had lately been effected in the neighbourhood and outskirts of Noseleigh. Major Grafters' house had been broken into, and the plate carried off; nay, even Mrs. Welter's cottage had been stripped of the silver tea-service which the inhabitants of Noseleigh presented to her husband, the late rector, on the thirtieth anniversary of his incumbency. This last robbery was attended by circumstances of peculiar atrocity, the robbers having severely beaten and stunned Mr. Cavendish's own groom, who had been kindly sent by him to sleep in the house as a protection. Everybody was frightened, and Mr. Cavendish took upon himself to communicate these atrocities to the Secretary of State, with whom he was acquainted. But Julia knew better what was the real cause of his absence. He was gone to plead with Lord Kingsland, and she trembled as she thought of the violent scene at that moment transacted between them; of the proud obdurate father, the firm but respectful son; of the prayers, the threats of disinherison, the maledictions lavished on her head.

But she exerted herself to seem indifferent; and it was with a melancholy interest that she went in the evening to a large tea-party at Miss Travers' house, partly convened for the purpose of exhibiting a converted Jew (the early first-fruits of the Church of England Philanthropic Association), but mainly in order to devise some little mark of attention to be shown, or some little memento to be presented, to the all-popular curate on his return. When the guests met, a thousand proposals were made and rejected. Several looked well, but were viewed askance as being too expensive. Indeed the master-mind and persuasive powers of Mr. Cavendish were

wanting; the fountain of liberality appeared dried up, and the ancient thrift of the Noseleighans pressed down the elasticity of their generous inclinations. Miss Travers seemed to feel this, and rightly judging that a man's absence is sometimes best supplied by material objects savouring of his presence, she determined to produce, for the inspection of the company, in spite of the positive prohibition of the curate, the salver destined to be presented to Mr. Collins, with a private view of which she had been indulged. It had been sent to her house from the rectory at her earnest solicitation, though with an express pledge that it should be shown to no one. Nevertheless, she yielded to the temptation; and so sooner had she gently hinted that it was in her possession, than the chorus of requests to see it was so loud and so universal, that she was at once compelled to have it brought into the room. It came in its oaken case, and there was a burst of admiration as they gazed on its broad and resplendent surface. Those who had been standing at the sides of the room crowded round the table; and among them the converted Israelite, whose eyes sparkled with eagerness almost un-Christian at the sight of silver plate. He bent over it, and pored into it; then starting back, in a tone of unmitigated disgust and astonishment he exclaimed,

"S'HELP ME, IT'S HALBATA!"

CHAPTER III.

So it was albata; and very shortly the Hon. and Rev. Frederick Cavendish himself turned out to be base metal. In the afternoon of the day after the revelation related above, the expected official from Bow Street arrived, charged not only with the mission of investigating the robberies which had taken place, but also with that of apprehending the secretary of the defunct London and Ilfracombe Direct Atmospheric Railway, who was reported at head-quarters to be masquerading as a clergyman at Noseleigh.

Yes, it was so. Our new curate was nothing more than a swindler. After the evaporation of the London and Ilfracombe he had sought about where to bestow himself and the deposits until the next American steamer should sail. Invited probably by the greenness of the Noseleighans in patronizing so enthusiastically his railway scheme, he had determined to quarter himself on them for a few weeks. Mr. Smith's advertisement, which happened to catch his eye, decided the character in which he was to figure. His preparation for the ministry consisted solely in walking into Messrs. Wiley and Putnam's shop in Waterloo Place, and purchasing a volume of American sermons, the authorship of which he shrewdly supposed was not likely to be detected at Noseleigh. It happened that he pitched upon the publication of a Boston divine, written with all the energy of local polemics against the Socinian sect, which, as our readers are perhaps aware, is gradually numbering among its adherents all the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers.

The gains, then, in Noseleigh of the Hon. and Rev. Frederick Cavendish, *alias* Charles Stafford, Esq. (Hon. Sec.), *alias* Mr. William Bunker, *alias* Downy Bill, may be summed up as follows:—

First of all, bed and board for four weeks *gratis*, the bills being, of course, unpaid.

Secondly, seventy pounds, subscribed for the foundation of the Church of England Philanthropic Association.

Thirdly, fifty pounds subscribed for Mr. Collins's piece of plate.

Fourthly, two large packages of valuable damask.

Fifthly and lastly—to the discredit of human nature—*Julia Collins's diamond ring.*

Moreover, Mr. Cavendish was supposed by the police-officer to know more of the robberies committed in despite of his *soi-disant* groom (the missing actuary of the London and Ilfracombe), than was quite accordant with the clerical character.

In exchange for the money and valuables carried off, the Noseleighans had in hand, 1st, a cheque for 200*l.* on Glyn, Hallifax, and Co., taken from a genuine cheque-book, but returned with "no effects" marked on it, all the funds of the London and Ilfracombe having been drawn out by the chairman and secretary some weeks ago; 2d, a salver of patent registered albata plate, value two pounds ten shillings; 3d, a ring of mosaic gold, with a paste diamond, value three shillings and sixpence, in the possession of Miss Collins.

It is needless to say that Lord Kingsland indignantly repudiated, for himself and his son, Frederick Cavendish, all connection with Our New Curate.

That ingenious gentleman escaped across the Atlantic in safety. The expected arrival of the policeman frightened him away a day before his time; but, luckily for him, the incredulity of the people of Noseleigh was so great as to stagger for awhile his pursuers. They remained on the spot so long, that the steamer had sailed before their return to London on his track. He went, but he left us sadder and wiser men. We were ashamed to return at once to our old bickerings. We have been more knowing and less uncharitable ever since.

THE END.

Werner.

BSB Bayerische StaatsBibliothek
MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

Hearts in Mortmain, and Cornelia

Paris 1850
P.o.angl. 153 o
urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10746727-6